

THE ROLE OF GDR CHILDREN'S LITERATURE DURING  
THE HONECKER YEARS

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## ABSTRACT

During the final two decades of the GDR's existence, a significant change of role can be observed in its children's literature. Until that time, children's books had largely reflected official ideology, particularly during the formative years of the State, when it was deemed necessary to convince the young of the benefits of socialism and to encourage their cooperation with the emerging system of government. By the 1970s this role had lost its immediate relevance. Encouraged by the foundation of institutions and publications which established a framework for the debate of children's literature and by the apparent relaxation of restrictions on literature introduced on Honecker's accession to office, a new, less compliant children's literature began to emerge.

Drawing on the output of the GDR's largest children's publisher, the Kinderbuchverlag Berlin, and concentrating on works for 7 to 13-year-olds, the aim of this thesis is to illustrate the role adopted by children's literature during this period, as authors increasingly proffered viewpoints and encouraged ways of thinking which differed considerably from those the young received through the education system and the youth organisations. Certain children's book specialists in the GDR saw this role as so significant that they drew correlations between the messages the young received through children's literature and the number of young people who 'voted with their feet' in 1989.

This thesis, the first in Britain to concentrate exclusively on the children's literature of the GDR, takes as its framework the three principal areas of change in the children's literature of this period:

Section one examines how and with what intention authors during the Honecker years dealt with social issues in everyday life and concentrates on how portrayals of family life and of work and its effects on the family were often used to highlight dissatisfaction with the social policies of the State. In a state where censorship of the media was so severe, children's books were increasingly used to draw attention to social aspects ignored elsewhere. Often the messages in these books were therefore not solely directed at a child readership.

Section two looks at the depiction of the relationship between individual and society, examining portrayals of the socialisation process, both in stories with an everyday setting and in a specific type of fantasy story. The section analyses how such stories were used to encourage the young to question authority, criticise injustices and to activate readers to bring about change.

The third section questions the success of attempts to remove taboos from children's literature during this period and points to the ideological limitations within which authors operated. Despite critical portrayals of GDR society, depictions of the fascist past and of the GDR's relationship to other nations displayed a continued adherence to political taboos.

Completed after the Unification of Germany, the thesis concludes with observations on the subsequent fate of the GDR's children's books and of those involved in the field of children's literature.



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## NOTE

Because the majority of the texts dealt with below are largely unfamiliar in this country, it was necessary to include a substantial number of quotations to illustrate the arguments of this thesis. In order to make the thesis accessible to non-German speakers, a translation of these quotations is included in Appendix 2 on page 202.

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## DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis was composed by me and that the work contained in it is my own.

## Foreword - 'children's literature'

The classification 'children's literature' on its own is a blanket-term and as vague as the concept of 'adult literature'. Unqualified, it can cover a vast range of works from nursery primers to the 'facts of life' books, from Enid Blyton's *Little Noddy goes to Toyland* to Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island*, and it therefore seems important, in making an evaluation such as this, to define from the outset what is intended here by its use.

The term 'children's literature' has been used throughout this thesis as an equivalent of the GDR term 'Kinderliteratur', which, in line with the official GDR age categorisation of 'the child' and 'the young person', referred to literature published for the under-14s - perhaps a surprisingly late cut-off point by other countries' standards. From 14 onwards (officially to 25 but more usually to 18) the term 'Jugendliteratur' was employed.

The texts dealt with in this thesis were all written intentionally for children (thus excluding adaptations of works originally aimed at an adult audience) and were all published by the Kinderbuchverlag Berlin, which conveniently designated each for a specific age group, ranging from 7 (when the child is beginning to read for itself and to cope with lengthier texts) to 13. All texts were therefore classed in the GDR as 'Kinderliteratur', and although several would probably in this country fall into the category of 'teenage literature' or 'literature for young people', the term 'children's literature' has been used throughout in accordance with the GDR classification.

# INTRODUCTION

Children's literature of all cultures has, since its origins, tended to be accredited with a highly didactic function. It is used by one generation to pass on its beliefs, ideals and moral values to the next, and to show through contrasting images what is and what is not thought to be acceptable. Given the GDR's centralised, directed system of literature production and the need after the Second World War to eradicate the traces of a highly successful Nazi youth propaganda, this didactic aspect acquired even greater emphasis in the early years of the State, and works for children were viewed firmly in the context of the educational values they conveyed. The children's author Gerhard Holtz-Baumert, speaking in 1957, stated:

Auch bei der Erziehung unserer Kinder zu jungen Sozialisten ist die Kunst eine Waffe, und wir wären dumm, wenn wir diese Waffe im Bücherschrank verrostet ließen. <sup>1</sup>

Children's author Günter Saalman, interviewed three decades later, in a society governed by very different political, social and literary circumstances, gave a very different view of the role of the arts in the GDR:

Ich schreibe nicht aus Freude über 'heile' Zustände, sondern aus Zorn über Zustände. Das ist der ursprüngliche Schreibantrieb für die Autoren aller Zeiten. Kunst ist Kritik. <sup>2</sup>

Saalman is a fairly controversial author, but his views are not untypical, particularly of a new generation of children's book authors which emerged during Honecker's term of office. From the didactic position of providing positive images of the achievements of an emerging society, children's literature appears to have shifted gradually during the course of the 1970s to a far more critical stance, increasingly providing unfavourable views if not of the foundations of that society then of some of its most hallowed institutions and of a variety of problems which it had created.

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<sup>1</sup>*Das Kinderbuch : Gedanken und Ansichten*, edited by Renate Gollmitz (Berlin, 1983), p121.

<sup>2</sup>Claudia Rouvel/Günter Saalman, 'Der Leser will eine Geschichte lesen, gut erzählt ...', in *Almanach zur Kinderliteratur der DDR : Bücher und Bilder*, Katholische Akademie (Hamburg, 1989), pp46-51, (p50).

The Marxist-Leninist theory of literature places great faith in the ability of literature to change the world through the human subject, and common to both of the above views is a firm belief that literature's role is important in activating the reader - in the first instance to create good socialist citizens, and in the second to form critical young minds which question the contradiction between the values handed down to them and social reality. In considering the change of direction which the overall function of children's literature underwent, it is important to look at the development of the GDR's children's literature in the context of the political, social and literary circumstances to which it was subject.

During the formative years of the GDR, the most urgent requirement, by order of the Soviet Military Authority in Germany, was to provide an effective antidote to the legacy of Nazi propaganda. A children's publisher - the Kinderbuchverlag Berlin - was set up in 1949 and faced the task of finding material appropriate to the new circumstances. In comparison to adult literature, works which had been written in exile for children were relatively few. Several names were prominent - in particular Auguste Lazar, Alex Wedding and Max Zimmering - but in general there was a large vacuum to be filled, and this was achieved in the first instance by turning to the socialist children's literature of the Soviet Union, both for translations of its major works and for inspiration as to the direction children's literature should now be taking. There too children's literature was seen as an ideological weapon. The Soviet Union's Communist Party had declared in 1941:

Der Kampf um die bolschewistische Erziehung der Jugend und der Kinder im Geiste des Leninismus sowie der Kampf um die Erziehung der sowjetischen Arbeiter- und Bauernjugend im Geiste des Internationalismus verlangen in der gegebenen historischen Etappe äußerste Aufmerksamkeit gegenüber der Jugend- und Kinderliteratur, der schärfsten bolschewistischen Waffe an der ideologischen Front.<sup>3</sup>

Maxim Gorki had been dominant in the emergence of a new Soviet children's literature during the 1920s, and it was on the traditions which he had established that the GDR came to base its own literature for children. In essence this involved striving to provide in children's books a contrast to the perceived nature of bourgeois children's literature. The

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<sup>3</sup>*Das Kinderbuch : Gedanken und Ansichten*, p98.



latter was seen to have attempted to isolate the child in a sheltered, safe world, preventing it from developing the necessary knowledge to deal with adversity. Adults in this society pined for the safety of their childhood. Socialist children's literature aimed to equip young readers to cope with the world around them, both through depicting in children's books a more authentic picture of society and by bringing about the integration of books for children and adults into one comprehensive literature. Whereas bourgeois children's literature was considered to have consisted principally of trivial and second-rate literature, socialist children's literature would, through its quality, be emancipated to full equality with adult literature, so emancipating the child reader.

According to Marxism, the worlds of the child and the adult are subject to the same socioeconomic forces and therefore inseparable. Children should not be cosseted and sheltered from reality, and an author should accordingly not attempt to conceal life's adversities. However, despite the constant lip-service paid to this principal aim of socialist children's literature and the efforts of writers of the proletarian-revolutionary tradition who had returned from exile, Alex Wedding for example, the concept took many years to establish itself fully. Wedding described her vision of the function of children's literature as follows:

Unsere Bücher sollen ins Leben eingreifen und es umgestalten helfen. ... Wir wollen Bücher schreiben, die gute und edle Gefühle im Leser wecken, Bücher, die die Liebe und Achtung für unsere Menschen und ihre Arbeit vertiefen. Unsere Bücher sollen unsere jungen Leser zu selbständigem Denken und verantwortungsvollem Handeln erziehen; dies erscheint mir ganz besonders wichtig, da die deutschen Menschen so oft zu Kadavergehorsam erzogen worden sind. Wir Schriftsteller sind Erzieher. Und wir Kinder- und Jugendschriftsteller sind dies in ganz besonderem Maße. Und Erziehen bedeutet nach Gorki nichts anderes als Revolutionieren.<sup>4</sup>

It was felt that a high degree of authenticity would awaken the readers to the situation around them and activate them towards the desired cause, creating empathy for an emerging society. However, after the traumatic events of the War and the harsh conditions of its aftermath, many authors preferred to concentrate on more constructive aspects and on generating an air of optimism about the future. As author Eva Strittmatter commented:

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<sup>4</sup>*Das Kinderbuch : Gedanken und Ansichten*, p119.

Manch süßes Süppchen wurde literarisch gekocht, während das Leben die Kinder lehrte, Schmalzbrot zu ihrem Nutzen zu essen.<sup>5</sup>

Mirroring patterns of adult literature, the harsher realities were glossed over, and if criticism was expressed at all, it was directed at individuals - outsiders who were smoothly integrated or children who were easily converted to the beliefs of certain exemplary adult characters. The children's literature of the 1950s was strongly criticised in the GDR during the 1970s and 1980s by critics and authors alike (including those like Benno Pludra who had contributed to it) for the simplistic and overtly didactic views it contained.

Subsequent years brought further hindrances to the realisation of the aim. The unsuccessful uprisings in Eastern Europe and the building of the Wall meant that the encouragement of the independent thinking of which Alex Wedding had spoken was not particularly welcome. Indeed it was not until the 1970s, with the apparent relaxation of restrictions within the literary and social context, that this concept of children's literature really began to play a significant role.

In contrast, the second aim of socialist children's literature - that of emancipating children's literature - received at the outset a far more immediate boost through the great efforts undertaken to ensure that established adult writers also wrote for children. Increasing numbers of works were arriving from the West which contained values unacceptable within the new society (the works of Karl May, for example, and the *Trotzköpfchen* books). The future of socialism depended on the young accepting its values, and these values could perhaps best be illustrated through literature. Prompt action was needed on the part of the State to help to create and promote a specifically GDR literature. In 1950 the Ministry for Education established an annual prize competition for children's literature, and individual authors such as Ludwig Renn were approached and encouraged to attempt children's fiction. He recalls:

Mit entsetzlichen, moralisch und politisch gepfefferten Argumenten schleppte man mich in eine Sitzung ... . Es sollte da über die Notwendigkeit gesprochen werden, daß bekannte Schriftsteller Kinderbücher schrieben.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Quoted in *Beiträge zur Kinder- und Jugendliteratur* 84 (1987), p7.

<sup>6</sup>Fred Rodrian, 'Beginn - Bilanz - Aufgaben', in *Beiträge zur Kinder- und Jugendliteratur* 14 (1970), pp23-35, (p23).

It was considered a great breakthrough when, in 1955, both he and another established adult author, Erwin Strittmatter, were awarded the National Prize for Literature for works of children's fiction, and some, such as Friedel Wallesch in his study *Sozialistische Kinder- und Jugendliteratur der DDR* <sup>7</sup>, felt that emancipation had been achieved by the end of the 1950s. The process was generally spoken of in subsequent years as one which had been completed. The definition of 'Kinder- und Jugendliteratur' in the *Wörterbuch der Literaturwissenschaft*, for example, begins:

Zusammenfassender Begriff für einen Komplex des Literaturensembles, der in der bürgerl. Gesellschaft relative Selbständigkeit aufweist und in der sozialist. in die Nationalliteratur integriert erscheint. <sup>8</sup>

However, in terms of conventional emancipation models, it is debatable whether GDR children's literature, having passed through the self-awareness phase, ever really progressed beyond the stage of isolation within the context of the 'national literature'. It remained detached from the general literary debate, providing its own specialists to write its own history and theory while largely ignored by scholars of adult literature.

Given the didactic aims and partisan nature of the early GDR children's literature, the State attached great significance to its promotion once it was established. Legal measures were taken to ensure that all libraries had to provide a children's section and that any establishment selling books had to include works for children. In 1956 children's literature was adopted as a component of German teaching in schools, and recommended home reading lists were given. Through the efforts undertaken by schools, libraries, the Pioneer Organisation and the publishing houses - in particular the Kinderbuchverlag Berlin - reading established itself as a top leisure activity among children and the slogan 'Leseland-DDR' was used with growing frequency. Surveys carried out during the 1980s <sup>9</sup> show that by other countries' standards the book still remained of great importance to GDR children, although it must be admitted

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<sup>7</sup> *Sozialistische Kinder- und Jugendliteratur der DDR : Ein Abriß zur Entwicklung von 1945 bis 1975*, Schriftsteller der Gegenwart, Vol. 25, edited by Friedel Wallesch (Berlin, 1979).

<sup>8</sup> *Wörterbuch der Literaturwissenschaft*, edited by Claus Träger (Leipzig, 1986), p260.

<sup>9</sup> See Heidrun Esche, Inge Harych, Hannes Hüttner, 'Literatursoziologische Studie zum Leseverhalten von Kindern der 5. bis 8. Klasse', in *Weimarer Beiträge* 9/1983, pp1521-1533, (p1528).

that alternatives to the book in the form, for example, of toys, videos and computer games were not available in the GDR to such a vast extent as elsewhere.

Throughout the early years of the GDR State, the aims and role of children's literature remained fairly constant. The facility for debate was very limited and progress within the field remained minimal. During the 1960s, however, developments occurred which laid the foundations of a new concept of children's literature in the GDR. A decade of books for children in the GDR had provided several outstanding works, yet children's literature for the most part continued to be ignored by those involved in literary research. Besides stunting the growth of discussion among those directly involved in the publication of children's literature, this had the additional drawback of leaving an entire group of the middlemen, i.e. teachers, for whom children's literature had been a compulsory part of their training since 1956, without any major text to provide guidance on the subject. The 1960s saw the first publications of major studies on the development of GDR literature. Most neglected to mention works written for children. Although praiseworthy in themselves, attempts later made to remedy this situation - Friedel Wallesch's study which appeared in 1979, for example, and in 1981 Christian Emmrich's *Literatur für Kinder und Jugendliche in der DDR* (which was specifically intended as a teachers' handbook) - served to illustrate further the fact that children's literature, rather than being considered an integral part of a general literary development, had acquired an isolated position.

Two major developments in the early 1960s were to facilitate the advance of research and debate in the field of children's literature. In 1962 the first edition of the children's literature periodical *Beiträge zur Kinder- und Jugendliteratur*<sup>10</sup> was published by the Kinderbuchverlag. Initially appearing spasmodically and containing mainly extracts from works for children and the pronouncements of those such as Maxim Gorki and Anton Makarenko who had influenced GDR children's literature, *Beiträge...* was later to establish itself as a quarterly forum for the discussion of all aspects of the children's book world in the GDR and abroad. A year after its first edition, the first of the annual Children's Book Weeks was held in Halle. Following a Soviet example and under the initiative of

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<sup>10</sup>Referred to throughout this thesis as the *Beiträge...*

the Children's Literature Section of the Schriftstellerverband (the GDR writers' union), these organised events brought together authors, publishers, editors, librarians, teachers, the media, and of course young readers and their parents, and made direct discussion between these groups possible. The events always entailed a Theoretical Conference of the Writers' Union and were held every year in a different district so as to reach the widest possible audience.

For a long time, much-welcomed initiatives taken in the field of children's literature - the foundation of a collection of children's literature at the Staatsbibliothek in Berlin, for example, the first German academic library to accommodate such a collection, or the development of centres of research, such as that headed by Christian Emmrich at the Pädagogische Hochschule in Dresden - were due rather to an individual's personal initiatives than to any official preconceived plan for the development of children's literature. 1970, however, saw the formation of the Kuratorium Sozialistischer Kinderliteratur to monitor children's literature in the GDR. Its members - authors, academics, teachers and editors - were selected by the Ministry for Culture, again indicating the importance attached to children's literature by those in authority. Bruno Haid, Deputy Minister of Culture and first president of the Kuratorium, described the necessity for such an organisation:

Es ging uns darum, in dem Kuratorium ein Organ zu haben, in welchem über Wirkungsweisen und -möglichkeiten von Literatur auf junge Leser und somit auf die Erwachsenen von morgen diskutiert und Einfluß genommen werden kann. Wir wollten in vielfältiger Weise auf das Lesen und Leseprozesse einwirken und diese fördern.<sup>11</sup>

Its principal tasks were representing the GDR as a member of the International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY), and guiding the work of its own executive, the DDR-Zentrum für Kinderliteratur, which was formed in the same year. This latter organisation formed the coordination and administration centre for children's literature in the GDR, organising academic seminars, building up an archive of research in the field and publishing the academic periodical *Kinderliteratur-Report*, assuming the organisation of the annual Children's Book Week, staging exhibitions and

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<sup>11</sup>Horst Kunze, Anneliese Kocialek, Bruno Haid, Heinz Wegehaupt, Gerhard Holtz-Baumert, Richard Müller, Eva-Maria Kohl, Hannes Hüttner, Sabine Mähne, 'Blick zurück und nach vorn : 20 Jahre DDR-Zentrum für Kinderliteratur', in *Kinderliteratur-Report* 1/1990, pp3-21, (p6).



compiling an encyclopaedia of GDR children's literature. Both institutions assumed responsibility for several tasks which had hitherto been carried out by less substantial and less widely recognised organisations within the field of children's literature. Horst Kunze, whose own work with the Arbeitsgemeinschaft für das Kinder- und Jugendbuch der DDR (which he had co-founded in 1959) was made redundant by the two new organisations, felt that their nature was highly political:

Die alle und alles kontrollierende und überwachende Staatssicherheit im Dienste des Politbüros der SED brauchte zentrale Ansatzpunkte für ihre Arbeit. So war die politische Tendenz, und sie hat auch schließlich das Ende unserer Arbeitsgemeinschaft bewirkt, die beileibe nicht abgeschafft wurde, aber das 1970 vom Ministerium für Kultur, Hauptverwaltung Verlage, einberufene Kuratorium mit DDR-Zentrum, machte die Arbeitsgemeinschaft allmählich überflüssig.<sup>12</sup>

The Centre distanced itself from the political organ of the Kuratorium soon after the opening of the GDR borders in 1989, but even so failed to shake off its political reputation sufficiently to survive long after Unification the following year.<sup>13</sup> However, irrespective of the motives for their foundation, the coordination and framework these organisations afforded were to facilitate the debate necessary for the development of a new concept of children's literature during the 1970s.

Although proffering many interesting and useful areas of discussion, the developments of the 1960s and the debate they made possible only came to realise their full potential in the context of the literary and social changes which were introduced during Honecker's term of office. In June 1971 at the 8th SED Party Conference liberalising measures were announced, and in December of that year Honecker gave his famous speech calling for the removal of taboos within a socialist setting. Authors were encouraged to turn to everyday life as a source of subject matter rather than concentrating on the wider political themes. At the same time, changes were made to the school programme, giving more time to children's literature, which, together with teenage literature, now

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p3.

<sup>13</sup>Many of those who had been involved in the DDR-Zentrum für Kinderliteratur stayed on in the same premises, forming the Gemeinschaft zur Förderung der Kinder- und Jugendliteratur in 1992. Work on the encyclopaedia of GDR children's literature, which was due for publication in 1991, has been postponed.

constituted 50% of the entire German curriculum. At the end of the decade psychological and sociological research was published on the life of the child in the GDR, giving way to a review of the concept of childhood and stimulating the introduction of changes to the school system itself with an increased concentration on the development of each individual to their full potential.

As a result of these developments, writers for both adults and children began to experiment with form, increasingly abandoning the simple narrative of action in favour of a more reflective approach, showing, often through the use of fantasy, the part of the individual - in particular the aspect of self-fulfilment within a socialist society. In addition, the possibility of debate encouraged those involved in the children's book field to discuss the direction children's literature should now take, and the past consensus on its role began to be broken down.

An initial problem was that the concentration on the individual and the removal of taboos, with the necessary increase in authenticity in literature which the latter entailed, involved some degree of departure from the views previously expressed by the major influences of children's literature in the GDR. Anton Makarenko had spoken out very strongly against the individualisation of literary figures, and Maxim Gorki, in a statement much reiterated in subsequent debate, had written in 1921:

Wahrheit ist notwendig, für das Kind aber nicht die ganze Wahrheit, weil sie in weitem Maße für das Kind tödlich wäre.<sup>14</sup>

The concept of authenticity had been increasingly under debate since Hans Koch's paper 'Phantasie und Realität in der Kinderliteratur', presented at the Theoretical Conference during the Children's Book Week in Schwerin in 1965. The removal of taboos, however, represented a more drastic step. In comparison to adult literature, the notion of removing taboos from children's literature was doubly problematical, since it gave rise to the time-worn debate as to what is and what is not suitable for children to read.

While the older generation of children's writers tended to side with

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<sup>14</sup>*Das Kinderbuch : Gedanken und Ansichten*, p67.



Gorki's view of a limited authenticity and the necessity of certain taboos in children's literature, their views were challenged by a whole new generation of young authors who emerged during the 1970s, encouraged by the change in circumstances and by the higher profile and greater status now awarded to children's literature. They included a high percentage of women, for the first time breaking down the male dominance of the children's book field and providing a greater number of female central figures, which had been noticeably lacking until this point. These young writers were people whose formative years had been spent in the GDR and who therefore by necessity had a different view of the achievements of socialism than did their predecessors.

Lenin had stated that every generation reaches socialism by a different route from that of its predecessor. These younger authors' increasingly authentic portrayals of life in a socialist society did not always find favour with the more established figures in the children's book world. Fred Rodrian, for example, spoke out in 1977 against a what he called :

'verärgerter Realismus', der häufig aus historischer Kurzsichtigkeit und individualistischer Nabelschau kommt.<sup>15</sup>

Works written under the influence of the no-taboos policy and appearing in print from the mid-70s onwards showed that GDR children's literature was turning increasingly, as was literature for adults, towards authenticity and an individual, subjective and reflective approach with a concentration on everyday subject matter. Stories became less one-dimensional. Whereas previously a standard pattern had been the smooth integration of a child into society, with all the transformations this required entirely on the child's part, the process was now shown to be not quite so simple, as characters deliberated between self-fulfilment and conformity and the compromises both entailed. Conclusions were no longer so decisive, leaving the readers to question the situations portrayed. Independent central figures and social outsiders provided a strong contrast to the positive heroes of the past. With the orientation towards everyday themes came an increase in portrayals of family life, and in line with the awareness that the child and adult worlds are inseparable, adult figures, particularly parents, and their lifestyles were given a far higher profile

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<sup>15</sup>Fred Rodrian, 'Fragen und Notizen zur Situation der Kinderliteratur (Aus der Rede vor dem Verlagsbeirat November 77)', in *Beiträge...* 48 (1978), pp105-109, (p108).

and their problems and imperfections were dealt with in detail. In contrast to adult literature which largely ignores child figures, it would be difficult to find a GDR children's book of this period which does not deal significantly with adult characters.

Each Theoretical Conference called for new themes to be explored and as new ground was broken, a subtle shift in emphasis can be seen in the view taken of the role of the children's writer. From an increased concentration on the individual's right to self-fulfilment, the point was reached where the individual's demands came to stand in opposition to those made by the State. Books increasingly aimed to give children the courage to be themselves without fearing the consequences. Benno Pludra, whose works span the four decades of the GDR's children's literature and mirror developments within the field, showed at the 10th Congress of the Schriftstellerverband that it was not only the younger generation of writers who felt this way:

Wenn das Bemühen angepaßtes Verhalten erstrebt, was ja nicht eben selten geschieht, dann hat Literatur dort nichts zu suchen, soll sie nicht benutzbar sein.

Jeder ist nur einmal da. Er muß diese Einmaligkeit begreifen, die Kraft, die Begabung, die er hat, um das Alltägliche und Besondere zu tun, wie er's zum Leben braucht und wie es die Gesellschaft braucht. Auch dann zu tun, wenn es schmerzhaft für ihn ist. Oder schmerzhaft für die Gesellschaft oder für beide. Hier zuerst sehe ich eine Möglichkeit und auch Verpflichtung von Literatur.<sup>16</sup>

Similarly, the role of introducing authenticity to children's literature and the extra fillip this had been given by Honecker's no taboos speech had subtly altered so that many authors came to see it as their duty to point out problem areas within socialist society. In 1985, Christel Berger of the GDR's Academy of Arts wrote:

Jedem Soziologen oder auch interessiertem Ausländer, der über die Literatur etwas über unsere Wirklichkeit erfahren will, würde ich zuerst unsere Kinderliteratur empfehlen. Nicht, um es ihm leichter zu machen, sondern um die Vielfalt der Probleme zu repräsentieren.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>Benno Pludra, 'Beitrag im Plenum zum X. Schriftstellerkongreß : "...In die Kinder ... blickt die Welt hinein, aus uns Erwachsenen blickt sie heraus ..."', in *Kinderliteratur-Report* 3/1987, pp45-48, (p46).

<sup>17</sup>Christel Berger, 'Kindheit in Büchern von DDR-Autoren, geschrieben für kindliche oder erwachsene Leser', in *Beiträge...* 75 (1985), pp34-45, (p42).

This, in a sense, was a return to the original aims of the proletarian-revolutionary children's writers. Their political beliefs had stood in contrast to those of society, and their works had contained a great deal of social criticism to attempt to activate the readers to question the world around them. The goal now was not as drastic as the replacement of a political system, but authors aimed rather to point out the downside of life under socialism and to encourage the young to take action where possible to remedy various situations. Again to quote Benno Pludra:

Wer sonst, wenn nicht ein Schriftsteller, wäre mehr verpflichtet, auf Probleme hinzuweisen, unter denen Menschen leben und leiden müssen, und dafür einzutreten, daß sie überwunden werden.<sup>18</sup>

Children's literature adopted a role similar to that taken in Britain by the television soap opera 'EastEnders' - that of providing entertainment while dealing, occasionally in terms of which the Establishment does not approve, with current social issues through recognisable characters with whom the viewer can identify <sup>19</sup>. This role is not unique to the children's literature of the GDR, in fact since the 1970s it has been common to the majority of Western children's literature. In the West, however, where children's books are subject to market demands and have a relatively short shelf life, these issues tend to be dealt with purely on the basis of areas which have been made topical by the media. What gave GDR children's literature its particular status was the absence of coverage given to these social issues by the press and the media in general, where censorship was prevalent. Because of the media censorship, GDR authors were often looked to to provide criticism, and in this capacity commanded considerable authority. Children's authors saw it as their duty to make the young aware of social problems, providing a contrast to the ideals taught, for example, in the Young Pioneer Organisation and aiming to activate the readers beyond this awareness to bring about change. Works such as the Kinderbuchverlag's *Um sechs Uhr steh ich auf*, published in 1979 to mark the International Year of the Child, demonstrate the extent to which the Establishment influenced the thinking of the young. This collection of the thoughts of 11-13-year-olds about their lives in the GDR contains many entries which echo the following, written by a 12-year-old boy:

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<sup>18</sup>Benno Pludra, 'Möglichkeiten und Grenzen der Toleranz', *Almanach zur Kinderliteratur der DDR : Bücher und Bilder*, pp17-20, (p19).

<sup>19</sup>See Guy Lyon Playfair, *The Evil Eye : the unacceptable face of television* (London, 1990).

Ich finde, daß das Wichtigste in meinem Leben meine Eltern und unser sozialistischer Staat sind. Beide erziehen mich zu einer sozialistischen Persönlichkeit, die eine sichere, schöne und glückliche Zukunft hat.<sup>20</sup>

While the opinions published have obviously been selected from a wider choice of material, the extent of the lack of independent thought demonstrated is striking and led author Benno Pludra to express reservations about the nature of childhood in the GDR in his introduction to the book. Similar concern motivated many children's authors in the GDR. Those involved in various capacities in children's literature in the GDR displayed an extremely strong belief in the power of literature to change society through activating those who read it: at a conference in Bremen shortly after the GDR borders had been opened<sup>21</sup>, Christian Emmrich suggested that the young people who had voted with their feet or demonstrated for change had, through children's literature, been given the courage to strive for what they wanted.

Editorial pressure to omit or alter certain aspects of texts could lead to delays of several years before a book was published, and in these circumstances it was inevitable that subject matter would become of paramount importance and that each new theme dealt with would be welcomed as a breakthrough. Critics were, therefore, loath to attack on matters of style works which had introduced new themes, and this concentration purely on subject matter means that the majority of children's book reviews provide little critical guidance and can now only be read as products of the historical context in which they were written.

Children's book criticism is unique in that for the most part it is not aimed at those for whom the books are intended, i.e. children. While critics have praised the authenticity present in the introduction of adult figures and adult problems into the children's literature of the GDR and drawn the attention of authors, librarians and teachers to the material present in individual books, there is always the danger of leaving the children out. Adult critics welcomed the experiments with form which began after the

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<sup>20</sup> Katrin Pieper (editor), *Um sechs Uhr steh ich auf* (Berlin, 1979), p94.

<sup>21</sup> 'Darstellung von Geschichte und Zeitgeschichte in der Kinder- und Jugendliteratur der DDR' (Bremen, 24-26 November 1989). Conference organised by Roter Elefant - Arbeitskreis Kinder-Bücher-Medien.

removal of taboos, yet Kuhnert's survey in 1983 <sup>22</sup> showed that young readers had difficulties with those particular works. While the concentration on action steadily decreased in favour of more reflective stories, Bütow's survey carried out among 11-14-year-olds in 1977-78 made clear:

Der Lieblingsheld ist ... der aktive Mensch, der Schwierigkeiten zu überwinden hat, oftmals im Kampf gegen Naturgewalten als einzelner bestehen muß. <sup>23</sup>

Academic specialists in the field of children's literature have pointed out the increasing tendency of children's books to contain messages for adults, encouraging them also to question their behaviour and the world around them. One of these specialists, Karin Richter, indicated that this could have serious consequences if overemphasised:

Die Zielstellung, über das Kind bzw. über die öffentliche Debatte den Erwachsenen zu erreichen, ist in einzelnen Büchern ... bereits mit der dominanten Wirkungsabsicht verbunden. Damit stellt sich aber die Frage nach dem Charakter der Kinderliteratur überhaupt, denn der zunächst angesprochene Leser muß das Kind sein, und vorzugsweise dieser Leser muß die literarische Geschichte zur Bereicherung des eigenen Daseins und seiner Weltsicht rezipieren können. <sup>24</sup>

The increased concentration on dealing with social issues coupled with this growing desire to reach an adult as well as a child audience meant that children's literature, which was often considered to be less heavily censored than adult literature, began to run the risk of being hijacked as a vehicle of social criticism.

The intention in the following chapters is to examine the role children's literature adopted during the Honecker years. Focussing, as GDR children's literature did during this period, on fiction with an everyday

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<sup>22</sup>Heinz Kuhnert, *Attraktivität und Wirkung : Das Kinderbuch im Urteil der Leser*, Resultate 8 (Berlin, 1983).

<sup>23</sup>Wilfried Bütow, 'Zur Entwicklung von Leseinteressen und Leseverhalten der Schüler', in *Weimarer Beiträge* 8/1981, pp72-99, (p84).

<sup>24</sup>Karin Richter, 'Wirklichkeitsmodellierung und Adressatenbezug : Einige Fragen an die Kinder- und Jugendliteratur und ihre Theorie', in *Schauplatz : Aufsätze zur Kinder- und Jugendliteratur und zu anderen Medienkünsten*, edited by Joachim Schmidt (Berlin, 1986), pp25-36, (p28).



setting, the aim is to demonstrate the way in which various issues were dealt with. Since circumstances dictated that subject matter was of such importance, the author's purpose in covering these issues will be central to the study, along with the integral messages conveyed, the readership implied, and to what extent the author's purpose was blunted by stereotyping, and the imposition of contrived happy endings and smooth solutions.

The works dealt with in this study were all published by the Kinderbuchverlag Berlin during Honecker's term of office, principally from 1974 onwards, when the new role of children's literature had begun to take effect. The Kinderbuchverlag, founded in 1949, was the longest-established publisher to deal exclusively with children's literature and had by far the largest output <sup>25</sup>. It played a central role in the GDR children's book scene, organising annual conferences with its authors, and awarding annual prizes for authors, for illustrators, for research and for services to children's literature. It was also responsible for the publication of practically all academic studies in the field of children's literature in the GDR. The Kinderbuchverlag therefore provided ideal material, both because of the diversity of the works published and because of the mainstream nature of the organisation.

All works dealt with in this thesis were designated by the Kinderbuchverlag for the 7-13 age group. Where books for readers at the lower end of this scale are dealt with, this is done mainly to provide a contrast to the more complex portrayals for older children. Most works examined here centre around the 10-11 age-group. Psychological studies<sup>26</sup> have shown this to be a crucial age at which children begin to search for their identity, to question the world around them, and to gain in mental sophistication, becoming capable of entertaining more abstract and less one-dimensional concepts. As such, this age group is of particular interest to the following study.

For the sake of clarity, the study has been divided into three sections,

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<sup>25</sup>Between 1980 and 1985 the Kinderbuchverlag published 881 first editions in 25 million copies (Steffen Peltsch, 'Kinderliteratur der DDR: Fakten und Zahlen' in *Almanach zur Kinderliteratur der DDR : Bücher und Bilder* (Hamburg, 1989), pp15-16,(p15).

<sup>26</sup>See Nicholas Tucker, *The Child and the Book : a psychological and literary exploration* (Cambridge, 1981).

each one dealing with one of the three major concerns of children's authors during Honecker's office - the portrayal of everyday life, with its increased attention to adult figures; the importance of the individual with the increase in the use of fantasy, and the attempt to remove taboos from literature. Each section contains two chapters dealing with a different subject area of the field in question.

In 1966 Gerhard Holtz-Baumert had entitled his opening paper at the Children's Book Week 'Auf der Suche nach den Eltern', complaining of the lack of characterisation of adult figures and of family life. During the 1970s, the portrayal of family life became one of the major topics of children's literature in the GDR, but the concentration was increasingly on divorce and broken families - to the extent that critics began to complain about the lack of 'normal', traditional families in children's literature. Chapter one examines this phenomenon, looking at how family life was presented to young readers, and at the authors' purpose in covering the subject.

Chapter two explores the subject area of work and the change of focus its portrayal underwent once children's literature began to concentrate on the authentic portrayal of everyday life, and in particular family life. In contrast to GDR ideology, which portrayed work as the right and duty of every individual and a vital factor in the individual's self-development, the children's literature of the 1970s and 1980s shows work increasingly in an unfavourable light. Again and again it was seen as a force which seriously disrupted family life. This chapter also investigates the continued stereotyping attached to various professions and the political ideology involved in the negative portrayal of certain occupations.

The second section analyses the increased concentration on the individual which came about in the 1970s and 1980s and examines to what extent works show and how they deal with a conflict between individual wishes and society's demands. Chapter three considers the depiction of the socialisation process, assessing how far the 1950s model of the smooth integration of the outsider into society was, as the authors claimed, overcome. Chapter four looks at the increased use of fantasy in GDR children's literature during the 1970s and 1980s, and concentrates particularly on the use to which it was put to stress the individual's point of view and to demonstrate the socialisation process.



Christian Emmrich, in his study *Literatur für Kinder und Jugendliche in der DDR*, published in 1981, had claimed that GDR literature had broken all taboos which stood in the way of a realistic portrayal of life. The third section examines to what extent this was the case, concentrating primarily on the depiction of two political areas. Chapter five analyses the portrayal of the fascist past and its aftermath, and its implications for contemporary society. Chapter six examines the portrayal of other nationalities and in particular the East/West divide, where authors' attitudes to other political systems demonstrate their underlying attitude towards their own.

# SOCIAL ISSUES IN EVERYDAY LIFE

## 1. THE FAMILY

Until the mid-1970s, detailed portrayals of family life were rare in GDR children's literature. Authors tended to produce action-based stories and it was therefore advantageous to concentrate on central characters who were free of the restraining influence of older members of society. The 1966 Theoretical Conference centred around this fact, Gerhard Holtz-Baumert setting the theme with his opening paper 'Auf der Suche nach den Eltern'. He lamented the fact that, in omitting adult characters from children's stories, authors missed the opportunity to depict an ideal form of parental guidance, and pointed to the contradiction between the situation observed in children's literature and the belief that the child and adult worlds were inseparable.

Twenty years later, discussion at the 1986 Theoretical Conference in Neubrandenburg, led by the author Hannes Hüttner and Claudia Rouvel, children's book critic and deputy editor of the *Beiträge...*, centred around the theme 'Arbeit und Familie in der Kinder- und Jugendliteratur' and demonstrated the extent to which a strongly-defined family setting had come to dominate GDR children's literature in the 1970s and 1980s. Indeed, it would be difficult to find a GDR children's book of this period which did not have a significant number of adult characters and a detailed family milieu. However, the family stories of this period, far removed from the depictions of parental guidance for which Holtz-Baumert had hoped, focussed with growing frequency on families with difficulties, highlighting areas which had, until this time, been considered taboo. Portrayals of divorce, domestic conflict and the neglect of children due to work commitments became so widespread that Hüttner and Rouvel expressed reservations about the limited overall picture of family life presented to young readers. The increased tendency of children's literature to focus on the family was due in part to the literary developments of the period. For the children's writers of the 1970s and 1980s, with their concentration on stories of everyday life and of the individual, the family proved an ideal setting. However, it was particularly the increasing tendency to use children's literature as a forum for the discussion of social issues which determined the nature of its portrayal.

The depictions of family life to be found in GDR children's literature during Honecker's term of office, with their concentration on discordant, overburdened and broken families, contrast sharply with official pronouncements within the GDR on the favourable conditions the State had created for the family. Those in authority tended to concentrate solely on the achievements of the State's family policies, particularly, as shall be seen in the following chapter, in the area of work. This led to hackneyed slogans, such as 'Familienfreundliches Land DDR', and to banal declarations reflecting this concept. Honecker, speaking at the 10th Party Conference in 1981, for example, stated:

Vor allem mit der Verwirklichung des sozialpolitischen Programms entwickeln sich immer günstigere Bedingungen für das Leben der Familien und die volle Wahrnehmung ihrer Verantwortung bei der Erziehung der Kinder.<sup>1</sup>

Such statements reflected the propensity on the part of the Establishment to deny the existence of discontent and of social problems. Discussions such as those held at the Theoretical Conference in 1986 focussed precisely on these areas, and reflected determination on the part of both authors and children's book specialists to use children's literature to increase awareness of existing social problems. In writing about families with problems, children's authors aimed not only provide the comfort of recognition to those who were confronted with a similar domestic situation and whose predicament had hitherto been ignored, but also to highlight the extent of the problems in existence.

Although the majority of children's books considered in this thesis demonstrate a clearly defined family setting, those discussed in this chapter are works which focus on the issue of broken families or which specifically illustrate the quality of family life and the perceived role of the family within the State. The aim is to investigate in what way these subjects were depicted in the children's literature of the 1970s and 1980s, to question how far such works deviated from official ideology, and to analyse authors' varying intentions in concentrating on this area, considering, for example, at whom the messages of these texts were aimed.

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<sup>1</sup>Quoted in Helmut Stolz, *Wie soll dein Kind sein?* (Berlin, 1988), p4.

## The concentration on broken families

Where the depiction of family life in children's literature was concerned, divorce was among the first taboo areas to be dealt with during the 1970s. It is rather unclear why the subject should have remained taboo for so long. Divorce was an intrinsic part of the family theory propounded by Marx and Engels. Engels had stated in his *Ursprung der Familie, des Privateigentums und des Staats*:

Ist nur die auf Liebe gegründete Ehe sittlich, so auch nur die, worin die Liebe fortbesteht.<sup>2</sup>

Apparently liberal theory, however, often differed from somewhat conservative practice. The 1965 Family Law consolidated legal measures first introduced by the Soviet Military Administration in Germany which had reduced the obligation to marry for purely legal, moral or economic reasons by granting equal status to single mothers and to their children. Although this was viewed in the GDR as a significant achievement, subsequent legislation displayed a distinct ambiguity on the part of the leadership, both with regard to marriage and to the position of single-parent families. Legislation introduced at the 1971 SED Party Conference had, while creating measures aimed at improving family life, appeared to go to great lengths to promote marriage as the ideal, not least through the considerable financial advantages to be gained by those who married young. Official publications tended to equate the family with marriage, promoting this as the norm. For example *Familienförderung als gesellschaftliche und staatliche Aufgabe* (1986) by Anita Grandke, professor in family law at the Humboldt Universität, Berlin, begins:

Die Familie ist eine natürliche menschliche Gemeinschaft zweier Partner, die auf der Anziehungskraft der Geschlechter beruht und die Kinder, die in dieser Gemeinschaft aufwachsen, einschließt.<sup>3</sup>

Having thus excluded from the outset single-parent families, the author goes on to emphasise the apparent importance of marriage within society:

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<sup>2</sup>Friedrich Engels, *Der Ursprung der Familie, des Privateigentums und des Staats* (Berlin, 1987), p98.

<sup>3</sup>Anita Grandke, *Familienförderung als gesellschaftliche und staatliche Aufgabe*, (Berlin, 1986), p7.

Freisein vom Zwang zur Ehe verringert in keiner Weise die Bedeutung der stabilen ehelichen Partnerschaft, und die Gesellschaft erwartet von allen Bürgern, daß sie um solche Beziehungen als Grundlage der Familie ringen.<sup>4</sup>

The State's annual 'Tag der Familie', celebrating the family, continued throughout this period to be promoted with posters showing the conventional mother, father, daughter and son. Given that both the divorce rate and the rate of births outside marriage during this period were approximately one in three<sup>5</sup>, this must surely have isolated a large proportion of GDR families. On a less official level, language too played an important role in this isolation : single-parent families were constantly referred to as 'unvollständig' or 'Restfamilien', which appears to imply some degree of inferiority.

Given such attitudes, it was natural that there should be unease at the increasing depiction of divorce in children's literature, especially as the issue began to appear in works for all age groups, including the very young. One work which appeared to cause particular concern to the publishers was Günter Saalman's poem *Heut heiratet Grit* (1989). Written for very young readers and eventually published in board book format, it begins:

Heut heiratet Grit.  
Wer heiratet mit?  
Freund Ben? Nein, der Heiner  
kommt mit Riesenschritt.

and ends:

Wer hat das Fest geknipst,  
war keine Spur beschwipst?  
Ich nicht, du nicht, wer denn?  
Der Ben.  
Den Grit ganz bestimmt  
das nächste Mal nimmt.<sup>6</sup>

Despite the humour of the poem, the casual attitude towards marriage it demonstrates was deemed by the publishers to be unsuitable for the very

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p58.

<sup>5</sup>See *Statistisches Jahrbuch 1986 der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik* (Berlin, 1986), table 359.

<sup>6</sup>Günter Saalman, *Heut heiratet Grit* (Niederswiesa/Berlin, 1989).

young. Because of its conclusion, Saalmann faced substantial difficulty in having the work published, and eventually managed to do so only by threatening to withdraw the text altogether.

Saalmann's work was, however, something of an exception in this area. A firm opponent of sheltering children from the harsher realities of life, this work perhaps represents the author's ironic response to the way in which the issue of divorce was treated by other children's writers. While concern was often expressed at the extent to which marital breakdown was depicted in children's fiction and of the possible effect of this on the young (author Wolf Spillner at the Theoretical Conference in 1986 asked, for example, 'Spielen unsere Kinder oder Enkel eigentlich noch Vater, Mutter, Kind?') such opinions failed to take into account the manner in which the subject was, on the whole, approached. The inclusion of divorced parent figures was very common in the GDR children's literature of this period, thus giving the accurate impression that divorce was widespread within society. However, the majority of works which deal specifically with the issue of broken families continued to adhere to the official stance, stressing marriage as the ideal to be striven for. Examination of the various fictional works of the 1970s which focus on divorce reveals that children's authors invariably simplified the issue by setting the story at some distance from the emotional events of the divorce itself.

Contrary to the aim of providing in GDR children's literature an authentic picture of life in order to equip the young to come to terms with the world around them, there was a marked tendency to shield the young from the harsher realities of the divorce process. Few works gave any indication of the breakdown of the parents' relationship. Even Brigitte Birnbaum's *Winter ohne Vater* (1977), for the over-9s, which begins at an earlier stage of the process than most, with the mother returning from court to announce that she has been awarded custody of 9-year-old Christian and his sister, fails to give any outline of family life before this event. This deprives the reader both of a norm against which to assess the present situation and of a favourable depiction of the father. While the mother is presented as an ideal character (Steffen Peltsch, editor of the *Beiträge...* wrote of her 'Als Leser kann man sein Herz an sie verlieren' <sup>7</sup>), the father figure remains vague throughout. The reader is thus led to

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<sup>7</sup>Steffen Peltsch, 'Die eine Lebensatsache und die Kinder und fünf Bücher' in *Beiträge...* 50 (1979), pp27-50, (p37).



welcome the inevitable rejection by the boy of his father and to focus on the strong bond between mother and son, which is presented as an aspect which will enhance both of their lives ('Vati hat Mutti enttäuscht. Chris wird Mutti nicht enttäuschen.' <sup>8</sup>).

While it is perhaps necessary to convey a sense of optimism about life after divorce in a story such as this, Birnbaum demonstrates a tendency, in common with most authors of the period, to avoid the harsher aspects almost entirely. The majority of authors who dealt with divorce during the 1970s further compounded this by setting the story some time after the divorce and focussing on the happier prospects of new partnerships and of remarriage. Bahre's *Der Dicke und Ich* (1976), a story for the over-11s, provides a typical example of this. Like *Winter ohne Vater*, it tells of a family left by the father. However, the concentration is on later events, describing the attitude of the protagonist, Florian, towards his mother's new partner, Mertens, as the boy progresses from his superficial impression of 'Der Dicke' to his acceptance of the man as part of the family. As the title suggests, the figure of the mother remains vague throughout.

As in Birnbaum's story, indeed perhaps to a still greater extent, the reader is led to see the father purely in negative terms and thus to welcome the boy's acceptance of Mertens as a satisfying conclusion. Bahre simplifies the issue for the readers by equating the process of the acceptance of Mertens with a gradual alienation between Florian and his natural father, who is portrayed as lacking in time, sympathy and consideration. The author emphasises the neglect within the father-son relationship by identifying this relationship with their special tree - a 'Traumbaum', which the boy and his father used to visit once a year, lying under its branches while exchanging their dreams about the future. After the divorce, the father continually postpones their pending visit until the boy eventually ventures to the spot alone, only to find that the tree has gone. Its disappearance is thus directly linked to the father's neglect of his son, and the metaphor is continued in the comparison of the 'Traumbaum' with a sturdy pear tree growing in the garden of the Marinetti family, a family who are shown to uphold secure, traditional family values:

Einen Birnbaum, der in einem Garten steht, eingezäunt und vom Zugriff anderer geschützt. Wie der bei Marinettis.

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<sup>8</sup>Brigitte Birnbaum, *Winter ohne Vater* (Berlin, 1977), p120.



Doch unser Nußsetzling hatte nun mal keinen Zaun gehabt und keine tägliche Pflege. Er stand, ein Zwerg zwischen Riesen, und wartete auf unsere jährliche Fahrt hierher, um uns zu zeigen, wie er wuchs. Und plötzlich hatte ihn jemand beim Blätterschöpf gefaßt und mitsamt den Wurzeln aus dem Erdreich gezogen und ihn achtlos zu anderem Unkraut auf einen Haufen geworfen.<sup>9</sup>

While the narrative here attempts to convey the sense of regret and bitterness felt by the child of divorced parents, it also indicates the tendency to present the characters as simple representatives of right and wrong. The father is depicted as negligent. Mertens, on the other hand, is portrayed throughout as someone to whom Florian can turn when in trouble and who has the patience to win the boy's affection. The natural conclusion is that Florian's father, in the light of his behaviour and of the boy's growing affection for Mertens, becomes purely a memory referred to in the past tense:

Vater war mein bester Freund gewesen. Und er hatte mich einfach vergessen. Er wußte sicher nicht mal, was echte Freundschaft ist.<sup>10</sup>

In a telling scene in Bahre's *Der Dicke und ich*, Florian explores the possibility of his parents' reconciliation by asking his father about Erich Kästner's classic *Das doppelte Lottchen*, a tale of twins who successfully reunite their divorced parents. His father, while expressing admiration for the book, points out:

“Siehst du, im Leben, also im Alltag, geht nicht alles so reibungslos und harmonisch, wie es manchmal in Geschichten steht.”<sup>11</sup>

Realistically, and in contrast to Erich Kästner's work, GDR authors did not attempt to bring about contrived solutions through the reconciliation of the two partners. This kind of false harmony prevents young readers from coming to terms with less harmonious situations in everyday life. However, while authors avoided this illusion of harmony, they tended to create another equally harmful variety, detracting from the seriousness of the process through avoiding the breakdown of relationships, through depicting events some time after the divorce itself and particularly through focussing on successful new partnerships.

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<sup>9</sup>Jens Bahre, *Der Dicke und Ich* (Berlin, 1976), p122.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p115.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p22.

The subject of divorce proved a difficult one for GDR children's literature since authors felt obliged to leave their readers, especially those who had experienced divorce, with some degree of hope. However, the overwhelming embodiment of this hope in the institution of remarriage served only to reinforce conventional views that single-parent families were undesirable. This image can be found throughout the children's fiction of the GDR. In many of the fantasy stories of the period the fantasy element springs from an attempt on the central character's part to replace a missing father figure. As shall be seen in chapter four, which looks at fantasy stories, children without fathers were depicted as being particularly at odds with the social consensus.

Traumatic family issues received similar treatment in those children's books which portray families where one parent had died: the death itself remained taboo, and again the stories tended to concentrate instead on remarriage at a later date, this constituting the optimistic message of the works. A typical example can be found in Robert Rosin's *Janot oder Der Freund meiner Mutter* (1983), designated for the over 12s. As in the majority of divorce stories, the narrative concentrates on the acceptance by a child of his mother's new partner. The obstacle to this acceptance is the memory of his late father <sup>12</sup>.

Rosin's story attempts to promote understanding for the parent's decision to take another partner. The work acquires a particularly didactic nature through the author's decision to tell the story in the form of the memories of the first person narrator, now grown up and recounting the events of one summer when he was 13, several years after his father's death. Thus, when his mother meets Janot while they are on holiday, and the boy feels threatened by their relationship, Rosin, rather than simply narrating the boy's feelings, puts the whole episode into perspective by pointing out the narrator's realisation in later life that the way he felt about the matter in those days was wrong:

Damals dachte ich: Sie hat mich und die Erinnerung an Vater. Sie darf es keinem gestatten, sich zwischen uns zu drängen. Ich glaubte, mir würde durch Janot, durch seine Verbindung zu Mutter etwas weggenommen, womöglich zerstört. Ich kam nicht auf den

<sup>12</sup>Rosin's book is unusual in that it breaks the strict taboo of terminal illness. Healthy parents dominated, and even here the health of the man before his sudden, short illness is stressed. If literature was truly representative of society, the number of fatal road accidents to be found in GDR children's literature was a poor reflection on the safety of the GDR's roads.

Gedanken, daß ich ihr das Recht auf Glück absprach, ihr den Anspruch auf Zuneigung für einen anderen Menschen verweigerte. Und ich dachte auch nicht daran, daß ich sie eines Tages, wenn ich auf eigenen Füßen stehen könnte und vielleicht selbst ein Mädchen, eine Frau gefunden hätte, verlassen würde. <sup>13</sup>

The conclusion of the story is similarly oversimplified for the reader. In a somewhat contrived happy ending, the narrator sees the effect his rejection of Janot has had on his mother, realises that his behaviour was wrong, and this is followed by Janot's sudden and largely unexplained reappearance to become a permanent member of the family. The reader is prevented from having to make a personal evaluation of the central figure's behaviour : the fact that the story is recounted as the memory of an adult allows little scope to reflect on the trauma inherent in the tale. This may be intended to reassure readers that such difficulties are surmountable but Rosin runs the risk of trivialising events of major importance to a child.

Gunter Preuß attempts to present a very similar issue to much younger readers in *Der hölzerne Kuckuck* (1977). Written for the 7 and over age group, the story begins with Peter's mother's wedding party which Peter refuses to attend, and tells how the boy gradually comes to accept his new Uncle Martin. While the death of his father is mentioned only briefly in flashbacks, Preuß does attempt to convey the sense of loss the boy feels and his difficulties in accepting his mother's new husband, yet the author resorts to unusual imagery to do so. The use of the wooden cuckoo, recurring throughout the story to symbolise the happiness Peter felt with his father, could perhaps prove too abstract a motif for the designated 7 and over age range, and one which contrasts sharply with Bahre's use of the 'Traumbaum' to present a more straightforward metaphor for the father-son relationship. A typical example of Preuß' descriptions can be found in the boy's recollections of his feelings as his father sat at his bedside and told him of his day at work:

Der hölzerne Kuckuck rief: "Kuckuck - Kuckuck ...!" Er wand die Lichtstrahlen des Mondes und der Sterne zu einer goldenen Schaukel. Peter setzte sich drauf. Er schaukelte. Immer höher. Bis hinauf zu den Sternen. <sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>Robert Rosin, *Janot oder Der Freund meiner Mutter* (Berlin, 1983), p71.

<sup>14</sup>Gunter Preuß, *Der hölzerne Kuckuck*, (Berlin, 1977), p22.

Preuß gives no direct motivation for Peter's eventual acceptance of his mother's new husband. The reader learns only that Uncle Martin displays a great deal of patience with the boy and that Peter's attitude appears to change, until at the end of the story Peter is shown to have found happiness despite the continued absence of the cuckoo. The work is one in the series of small format 'Kleiner Trompeterbücher', and in such a short book for younger readers it is difficult to depict a gradual and subtle process such as this without the process appearing a little superficial. While the work is less openly didactic than Rosin's, the ultimate message of optimism in remarriage remains the same.

In general, in works which focus on the death of a parent or on divorce the authors' aim appears to be to show that happiness can be found after tragedy. None, for example, tell of the final rejection of the parent's new partner or of substantial difficulties caused specifically by the outsider. It would be wrong to suggest that there were absolutely no depictions of the divorce process or of the problems which divorce can cause the young. Occasional examples can be found, but these are restricted to sub-plots. For example Gunter Preuß' *Julia* (1976), a substantial work, covering a wide variety of topics and one of the first children's books to deal with marital problems, shows one boy whose natural father, because of the lack of available accommodation, has been unable to move out of the flat which his ex-wife and children now share with her new partner. These are, however, secondary characters and their problems are simply referred to rather than dealt with in any detail. Examples such as this make clear that authors were aware of the difficulties the young could face as a result of divorce but chose instead to concentrate on conveying more optimistic messages, focussing on later, less traumatic events and particularly remarriage.

Close observation of the characterisation used in such stories as the above reveals a significant degree of political stereotyping which further detracts from the impact such works might have had and further emphasises the fact that, although new themes were being dealt with, the underlying tenor was highly conventional. In Bahre's *Der Dicke und ich*, for example, a significant implication can be drawn from the juxtaposition of Florian's father and Mertens. The negligent and self-centred nature of Florian's father, the newspaper editor, is representative of the portrayal of intellectuals in GDR children's literature. In stories dealing with family life they are invariably shown to be unsuitable parents and contrasted

with more reliable working-class characters. In Bahre's story it is implied throughout that Mertens, the lorry driver, is the ideal family man. Further emphasising this message, Bahre introduces the family of Florian's friend Ofen, whose financial circumstances are inferior to Florian's, and allows Florian to draw comparisons between Ofen's father and his own:

Ofens Vater kümmerte sich um alles. Um seine Frau, um das Essen, um die kleineren Geschwister. Er war auch für die Gäste da, und nebenbei erledigte er noch so einiges, zum Beispiel Zeitunglesen, defektes Spielzeug reparieren, Pfeifen reinigen, Ofen nach der Schule ausfragen. Dafür konnte er sicher nicht dichten wie mein Vater. Und ob ihm ein Traumbaum eingefallen wäre, da wage ich auch zu zweifeln. Aber was war eigentlich besser? Dichten oder das, was Ofens Vater alles konnte? Na ja, Vaters Dichten nützte mir jetzt überhaupt nichts: Er war ja nicht mehr da. <sup>15</sup>

A similar contrast can be found in Preuß' *Julia*. Julia's domestic problems are contrasted throughout with those of her classmate, Liebscher. His father, a senior consultant, is shown to oppress both his wife and son, leaving the boy with behaviour problems. Julia's parents have their difficulties, but this is, as Steffen Peltch pointed out, 'Die Geschichte einer Scheidung, die nicht stattfindet' <sup>16</sup>. Their working-class background - her father works in a brewery and her mother as a tram driver - lead the reader to predict both that they will be portrayed as good parents and that their difficulties will be resolved.

Stories dealing with adoption also followed this convention. The adoptive parents, presumably selected because they are considered capable of providing an ideal family life, invariably hail from a solid working-class background. A striking example can be found in Barbara Kühl's *Irrlichter* (1986), a story for the over-10s, which tells how Christian, whose parents drowned at sea, is adopted by the Puttbreeses, a couple who are involved in the fishing industry. Christian's occasional memory flashbacks gradually reveal to the reader that his natural parents were highly materialistic people and Christian himself a very spoiled child. Through the boy's eyes, the author constantly conveys contrasts between the two couples, perhaps the most telling of which is the fact that his natural parents had been saving for a motorboat, purely for pleasure, while Hinnerk Puttbreese is a fisherman whose boat provides his living. In a significant motif, it is

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<sup>15</sup>*Der Dicke und Ich*, pp46-48.

<sup>16</sup>Steffen Peltch, 'Die eine Lebensstatsache und die Kinder und fünf Bücher', in *Beiträge...* 50 (1979), pp27-50, (p43).



implied that Christian's materialistic parents drowned when they followed false lights out to sea, mistaking these for the shoreline and thus taking the wrong direction, in both a literal and a metaphorical sense.

Through the personal progress the boy is shown to make when living with his new parents, overcoming his fears and preconceived ideas, the author implies that, rather than continuing to develop the individualistic traits he had begun to acquire from his real parents, the new family will fulfil the role which the State expects of it, enabling Christian to develop in the approved manner.

Such characterisation is common throughout the children's literature of this period. The overall picture conveyed to young readers is of the wealthier social groups as unreliable parents and of divorce almost exclusively as a problem of these groups. Having ostensibly depicted family problems in order to draw attention to the difficulties involved and to provide support for those who had had similar experiences, authors then proceeded to limit the impact their works might have had on the young through this political use of stereotypes. As with the promotion of marriage as the ideal, these works indicated a marked tendency to comply with official GDR ideology. The messages they conveyed deviated little from the official ideals taught to children through the education system and the Pioneer Organisation.

While the plethora of works dealing with divorce from the mid-1970s onwards led some critics to express reservations about the overall picture of family life, statistics showed that for vast numbers of GDR children such experiences were part of everyday life. Many of the young people who contributed to the Kinderbuchverlag's *Um sechs Uhr steh ich auf* (1979) - a collection of children's thoughts about their lives in the GDR - describe their parents' divorce as the saddest event in these young people's lives. The accounts also reveal a great fear of possible divorce and of the death of a parent. Such issues were an important reality for many children, yet even when taboos began to be broken and the topic became acceptable for children's literature, their depiction was generally simplified and rendered unproblematic. The young readers who had experienced divorce or the death of a parent, particularly those whose remaining parent had not remarried, were not granted the psychological assistance of coming to terms with their experiences through reading about others placed in a similar situation, while those who had not were not encouraged to devote



much thought to their implications.

However, while young readers were rarely confronted with unpleasant realities and were thus prevented from having to consider the wider or more serious social and personal implications of the broken family, the very fact that these portrayals existed in such abundance led adults involved in the field of children's literature to discuss these implications at great length, as the Theoretical Conference in Neubrandenburg demonstrated. Questioning whether the proliferation of divorce in children's literature was a true reflection of the actual social situation, those present speculated on the effects this would have on future society. Using works such as Marga Tschirner's *Die neue Oma aus Budapest* (1977), which recounts the remarkable ease with which a young boy, on returning from holiday accepts the fact that his widowed mother has, in his absence and without his knowledge, married a Hungarian colleague from work, authors and critics debated how authentic such portrayals ought to be and to what extent children should be involved in the decision to take a new partner. In this way, adults involved in the field of children's books were able to use even works whose implications they fiercely rejected to fuel debate on issues such as the effects of State policies on the family and of divorce on society. While such stories as the above, despite their harmonious endings and conventional messages, provided a basis for discussion among adults involved in children's literature, it would appear that the children for whom the works were originally written were excluded from this process. This trend developed throughout the 1980s when it became increasingly unclear at whom the messages of many children's books were aimed.

### The quality of family life

When family life began to take its place as a central theme of children's literature, criticism of its portrayal inevitably focussed on the proliferation of divorced and single parents, since these constituted a deviation from the conventional image of the family. The quality of family life portrayed and the extent of domestic conflict shown, principally between parent and child, should perhaps have proved more disturbing. Numerous works throughout the 1980s depicted generations incapable of communicating with one another and family rifts so serious that they led

the young to run away from home. Although this is a common theme of children's literature elsewhere, in a society where discipline was paramount and where the generation gap was denied since the generations were seen to share a common political and ideological purpose, such works acquired a particular significance.

Official policy stressed the role of the family as a link between individual and society. More radical Marxist theory had maintained that social changes would lead to the State taking on all responsibility for child-rearing with the family's role reduced to a purely biological one. Although this notion had been generally rejected long before the foundation of the GDR, echoes of the concept could be found in official talk of the transformation of the family and in legal definitions of the family's role. The latter was generally seen as vital in the psychological development of the individual family members to their full potential and in facilitating the integration of these individuals into society. The *Kulturpolitisches Wörterbuch* refers to the family as the 'kleinste soziale Einheit der Gesellschaft' and a 'zentrales Bindeglied zwischen Individuum und Gesellschaft' <sup>17</sup>. To ensure the stability of society, therefore, the State required stable and compliant families. Legally, the State could intervene directly in family life only after considerable measures had been taken to aid those families concerned. There was, however, a high degree of indirect intervention. Article 38 of the Constitution described the family's role in educating its children and the cooperation the family could expect from the State in this task:

Es ist das Recht und die vornehmste Pflicht der Eltern, ihre Kinder zu gesunden und lebensfrohen, tüchtigen und allseitig gebildeten Menschen, zu staatsbewußten Bürgern zu erziehen. Die Eltern haben Anspruch auf ein enges und vertrauensvolles Zusammenwirken mit den gesellschaftlichen und staatlichen Erziehungs- und Bildungseinrichtungen. <sup>18</sup>

This close cooperation which the family could expect in the education of the young was often resented, and in view of the ideas taught to children at school and in the all but compulsory youth organisations, the family was often seen as a sphere of private withdrawal. Perhaps this was one reason for the proliferation of family advice books which continued to

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<sup>17</sup>*Kulturpolitisches Wörterbuch* editor Andrée Fischer, (Berlin, 1978), p187.

<sup>18</sup>*Verfassung der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik* (Berlin, 1976, 7th edition 1985), Article 38, Paragraph 4, pp33-34.

appear throughout the Honecker years, providing distinct, idealised views of how the family should be. Helmut Stolz' *Wie soll dein Kind sein?* (1988) and Roland Rudolf's *Mit Beispiel und Liebe : Ratschläge für die Erziehung in der Familie* (1981) are typical of the many examples which attempted to show parents what children should be taught at home, and at which age they should be given various tasks or granted various freedoms. Such works even provided detailed timetables, showing how the day should be divided for various age groups.

Among the older generation of children's literature specialists during this period, opinions voiced on the position of the family within the State revealed very conformist attitudes. Christian Emmrich, for example, stressed the family's role in supporting the socialist education of the young:

Erst eine funktionierende Familie, die voll in die Gesellschaft integriert ist, ermöglicht im Zusammenwirken mit Schule und Jugendverband sozialistische Lebensweise.<sup>19</sup>

Increasingly throughout the Honecker years, however, this vision was contradicted in the portrayals of family life to be found in children's literature as the depiction of domestic difficulties became commonplace.

Not only were these families portrayed as being incapable of functioning as a link between individual and society, but their difficulties were often attributed to society's demands, since social commitments, particularly work, were shown to minimise the amount of time the family were able to spend together. At the 1986 Theoretical Conference and in numerous articles written during the 1980s, Claudia Rouvel drew attention to the fact that the portrayal of family life in GDR children's literature tended to centre around the evening meal table, and that this setting was used almost as a formula to demonstrate the stability or otherwise of family relationships. In a sense this was dictated by real life - because of the various social commitments of the individual family members, the dinner table often constituted the one place and time of day when the whole family met and communicated, and as such was a simple and effective means of portraying family life. At the same time it may also be used by the author to represent some sort of criticism of the burdens society places on the family.

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<sup>19</sup>Christian Emmrich, 'Ästhetisches Wesen und künstlerische Spezifik unserer Kinderliteratur', in *Weimarer Beiträge* 5/1978, pp5-37 (p7).

In choosing to write about domestic conflict, children's authors appear to have pursued very different aims from those who focussed on divorce. The author Benno Pludra stated in 1978 in an essay entitled 'Arbeit und Alltag':

Kinder, in die Gesellschaft hineingeboren ohne ihr Zutun, werden am ehesten darin heimisch, wenn sie es bei ihren Eltern sind. Das Elternhaus ist sehr wichtig, und darum liegt nahe, für unsere Geschichten Konflikte aus diesem Bereich zu suchen. Ich sage Konflikte, weil es wenig lohnend erscheint, Geschichten zu schreiben, in denen man bald schon weiß, wohin der Hase läuft. Nirgendwo ernste Gefahr, das gute Ende sozusagen programmiert.<sup>20</sup>

More than the somewhat simplistic stories of divorce and remarriage, these works encouraged the readers to think seriously about family life and its effects on the individual family members. Portrayals which centred solely on happy endings and harmonious families could only be detrimental to the young readers' personal development, failing to prepare them psychologically for possible encounters with conflict. Domestic conflict is something which the majority of young readers would have experienced but about which they were unable to read until the mid-1970s.

Pludra's own *Insel der Schwäne* (1980) is typical of the examples which appeared throughout this period. The story (for 13-year-olds and upwards) relates the experiences of Stefan Kolbe when, together with his parents and younger sister, he moves from his grandmother's home in the countryside to a new settlement in the centre of Berlin because of his father's work there as an architect. The conflict springs from the boy's difficulties in adjusting to the new surroundings, and comes to a head over an argument between father and son about the design of the new children's playground. Stefan and his friends object to the conventional concrete playground which has been proposed, but Stefan's father refuses to listen to their imaginative ideas and tears up his son's design. Pludra uses the setting of the ensuing evening meal to emphasise subsequent tensions within the family:

Sie decken den Tisch, sie tun es gemeinsam, nachher wird Stefan gerufen. Er wäscht sich die Hände und kommt an den Tisch, doch rührt sein Brot nicht an, den Tee nicht an, bis Hermann, der Vater, sagt: "Es tut mir leid, willst du das hören? Von mir aus mach die Zeichnung noch mal und häng sie morgen unten ans Brett, oder

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<sup>20</sup>Benno Pludra, 'Arbeit und Alltag', in *Beiträge...* 48 (1978), pp11-15, (p12).

häng sie gleich. Mach meinetwegen, was du willst, bloß endlich ein anderes Gesicht. Ich kann dich so nicht sehn."

"Schluß", sagt Susanne. "So kannst du mit ihm nicht reden."

"Ja wie denn dann und was denn noch?" Hermann haut auf den Tisch. Die ganze Familie starrt ihn an, und der Abend wird bleiben, wie er nun ist : Niemand sagt noch was, nicht mal mehr Sabine. <sup>21</sup>

Similar images of authoritarian fathers and subdued families are widespread. This scene, linking family time with a dangerous lack of communication, is echoed almost exactly in Klaus Meyer's *Petroleum-Jonny* (1982) - for readers in the 10 and over age group. Again the family have moved to Berlin, this time from the coast, because the mother, Ilse Schütt, no longer wants her husband to go to sea:

"Hauptsache", sagt sie, "wir sind alle zusammen, eine richtige Familie!" <sup>22</sup>

Ironically, the problems she had envisaged with her 12 and 13-year-old sons because of her husband's absence are aggravated by his presence. Their first evening meal together in the new house is an early indication of how the father takes out his frustrations on his family, particularly his sons:

"Ich habe es rausgekriegt", sagt Matze. "Es liegt am Geruch. Am Geruch orientieren sich die Ameisen."

"Ameisen!" ruft der Vater. "Ameisen! Was Wichtigeres hast du wohl nicht zu tun! Der Rasen muß gemäht werden. Das seht ihr wohl nicht. Ameisen!"

"Ich finde es schön, daß er das entdeckt hat", sagt Ilse Schütt.

"Er hat das entdeckt? Ja? Er! Glaubst du, das steht nicht schon in irgendwelchen Büchern?" fragt ihr Mann. "Guck doch mal in deiner schlaun Bibliothek nach. Ameisen!"

Ilse weiß, daß es jetzt besser ist, zu schweigen, und auch Matze und Jonny wissen das.

Peter Schütt hat Sehnsucht nach dem Meer. <sup>23</sup>

It is interesting that conflicts and confrontations such as these arising within the family context are almost exclusively between fathers and their children. The above excerpts are illustrative of the marked tendency of GDR children's authors to adhere to stereotypic sexual roles. Thus, while fathers were shown to create or aggravate conflicts, mothers

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<sup>21</sup>Benno Pludra, *Insel der Schwäne* (Berlin, 1980), p234.

<sup>22</sup>Klaus Meyer, *Petroleum-Jonny* (Berlin, 1982), p9.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., pp35-36.



were characters who attempted to intervene on their children's behalf and to placate both sides. Fathers were strong and authoritative, mothers were graceful, pretty and calm. Despite certain exceptions (most notably among single mothers, who, like those to be found in Christa Kozik's *Der Engel mit dem goldenen Schnurrbart* (1983) or Gerti Tetzner's *Maxi* (1979) - both of which shall be dealt with in the chapter on fantasy - were occasionally accredited with an individuality unknown among married women), the stereotypic roles occur so extensively that the majority of children's book parents could be interchanged without altering the plot.

The focus in these stories is on the child and it is with the child that the narrative sympathy lies. In each of the above stories the lack of communication has serious consequences. In Pludra's book Stefan runs away from home after the protest he has initiated against his father's plans for the playground gets out of hand and gives way to vandalism. The central character in *Petroleum-Jonny*, neglected at home, takes up the dangerous and obsessive pastime of stealing tail lights from passing trains and eventually, like Stefan, runs away. However, although the reader is made aware that the behaviour of the young central characters is often foolish, or indeed criminal, the blame for his actions seems to be placed very firmly with the influence of the father in the family context. In each case the responsibility for the actions is attributed to the father's intransigent behaviour. In contrast to Holtz-Baumert's wishes, expressed at the 1966 Theoretical Conference, these father figures were therefore not exemplary characters. Since the works were written for children, and since the father figures were used to convey strong criticism of uncompromising authority, these portrayals will no doubt have met with the approval of the young readers.

Some critics, however, found the characterisation too one-sided. Claudia Rouvel, for example, commented of the portrayals of adults in the children's literature of this period:

Wären Eltern nicht häufig psychologisch instinktos, charakterlich unzulänglich oder von Verdrängungen geplagt, viele Kinderbücher hierzulande gäbe es nicht. ... Es wäre interessant, einmal den entgegengesetzten Fall zu exemplifizieren, nach dem Muster: kluge, sensible, offene, gesprächsbereite und tolerante Eltern gegen maulfaules, aufsässiges, aggressives, unintelligentes und rohes Kind.



... Eine schöne Blödelei könnte dabei herauskommen.<sup>24</sup>

While such criticism (although, as mentioned above, applicable only to father figures) is justifiable to some extent, since a great many children's books appear to have been written according to a similar pattern, it fails to take into account the effect that such works could have, both on their readers and on subsequent publications for children. In contrast to the stories dealing with divorce or the death of a parent, these works do not provide simple solutions. Difficulties are not portrayed as endemic to one social class and there are no contrived happy endings. Endings are left open and as such provoke thought among readers of all ages about family relationships, and perhaps provide warnings about the way in which these are conducted.

During the course of the 1980s, the tendency of children's authors to provide in their works clear messages about family life in the GDR and the domestic difficulties experienced by the child became more pronounced. One method of achieving this was to concentrate on the subject of adoption, a very effective way for an author to demonstrate the importance of the family to the individual and to show, through the views of an outsider, the nature of family life. This is made particularly clear by Jürgen Leskien in his children's book *Georg* (1984). The plot centres around the adoption of 13-year-old Georg Bräuer (who has lived in a children's home since the age of 5) by the Eisenhuts - a couple who already have a 13-year-old son, Marek. The work does not avoid the difficulties inherent in family relationships and Georg's disappointment when family life does not initially meet his expectations. However, Leskien, who himself was orphaned at the age of 10 in 1949 and adopted by a working-class couple, uses the story of the adoption to convey specific views on the ideal nature of family life and the support which the family can represent to the individual. At times the work acquires a didactic character as minor characters philosophise on this ideal. Fräulein Schönfeld, for example, Georg's teacher at the children's home, tells Georg shortly before he leaves to live with the Eisenhuts:

Eine Familie ist mehr als eine Gruppe im Heim und anders als eine

<sup>24</sup>Claudia Rouvel, "Gesegnete Mahlzeit!?" Beobachtungen an Abendbrottischen in Kinderbüchern der achtziger Jahre' in *DDR-Literatur '85 im Gespräch*, edited by Siegfried Rönisch (Berlin and Weimar, 1986), pp53-70, (p69).

Raumschiffbesatzung .... Großeltern, Mutter, Vater, Kind, Geschwister, sie sind durch unsichtbare Fäden miteinander verbunden. Ein dichtes Geflecht, das Schutz sein kann für die Jüngsten und sicherer Halt für die Älteren in schlechten Tagen. <sup>25</sup>

Similarly, Leskien directly stresses the importance of the evening meal setting in the context of family relationships as another minor character, Jan Janowski, whose own relatives had died in a concentration camp, tells the Eisenhut family as they sit around the table one evening:

“Sicherlich klingt es sehr philosophisch, dabei, wie soll ich es ausdrücken, dabei meine ich es direkt, und der Umstand, daß wir hier so vereint sitzen, bestätigt meine Gedanken - ich glaube, für den einzelnen ist wohl die Familie der eigentliche Mittelpunkt der Welt. Bei allem Wichtigen, das es gibt. Hier”, Jan klopfte mit dem Finger ganz sacht auf den Tisch, “hier beginnt er seinen Tag, hierher kann er immer wieder zurückkehren, immer, ob als Sieger oder als Besiegter.” <sup>26</sup>

The author contrasts this image sharply with the insights given into family life elsewhere in the book. Georg's friend Kaule, for example, is constantly neglected. The opening passage describes how Kaule's evening meal consists of sandwiches, left behind by his parents, along with a list of chores and some money to buy an ice cream. The parents choose to spend their time on their allotment rather than with their son. By depicting Kaule's subsequent admission to hospital with faked appendicitis and the operation he undergoes purely in a bid to gain his parents' attention, Leskien demonstrates how important a caring family is to the child, and perhaps provides a warning to any adults whom the message may reach.

Kaule ließ die Puppen tanzen, sonnte sich in der Fürsorge seiner Eltern. Er scherte sich nicht um das müde Gesicht der Mutter und nicht um den Arbeitsausfall des Vaters. In böser Freude dachte er, jetzt sind sie bei mir, jeden Tag. <sup>27</sup>

That this was one of Leskien's motives in writing *Georg* is made very clear in the introduction, written in italics, which describes a chance meeting between the protagonist and the narrator a year after the events depicted in the story, and makes evident that the adoption did subsequently succeed. The narrator tells Georg that he has written a book of the boy's

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<sup>25</sup>Jürgen Leskien, *Georg* (Berlin, 1984), p32.

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*, p170.

<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*, p7.

story and explains his reasons for doing so:

“Und was werden die Leute von uns denken, von dir und von mir, wenn sie es lesen?”  
Ich zögerte einen Augenblick. “Vielleicht macht es sie neugieriger, vielleicht gehen sie behutsamer miteinander um, wenn sie gelesen haben. Vielleicht.”<sup>28</sup>

The work represents a plea by the author for greater care and tolerance within the family, and, since the family problems within the story are attributed largely to the neglect of children by their parents, it can be assumed that this plea was directed, at least in part, at an adult audience.

During the 1970s and 1980s children's books increasingly contained specific messages about the nature of family life which were not necessarily directed solely at a child readership. Reviewing Birgit Herkula's debut work *Manchmal weiß ich was vom Tag* which appeared in 1987 for the over-10 age-group, Karin Richter pointed out:

Viele Wirkungspotenzen des Buches können sich ... nur dann voll entfalten, wenn es nicht nur von kindlichen Lesern rezipiert wird. Insofern drängt dieses Buch wie viele andere Kinderbücher die Frage auf, wie im Umgang mit derartigen Texten eine Öffentlichkeit gefunden wird, damit nicht wertvolle Wirkungsmöglichkeiten verlorengehen. Von einer öffentlichen Reaktion auf Kunstwerke für Kinder sind wir gegenwärtig - wie mir scheint - allerdings weit entfernt. Viele Kinderbücher enthalten aber wesentliche 'Botschaften' für Erwachsene, wollen bei diesen Nachdenken über ihr Verhalten gegenüber der jungen Generation initiieren. Insofern sind Überlegungen, wie ein breites Lesepublikum für diese Texte gewonnen werden kann, dringend geboten.<sup>29</sup>

Herkula's book did provoke some discussion within the limited field of children's book specialists but appears to have failed to reach a wider audience. Its subject matter and particularly its style were unusual but not so sensational as to attract extensive attention. The book is narrated in the first person by Diana, an 11-year-old girl, and stands in sharp contrast to the majority of family stories of this period with their concentration on conflict, clichéd parental roles and the portrayal of one overriding crisis.

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<sup>28</sup>Ibid., p9.

<sup>29</sup>Karin Richter, 'Birgit Herkula: "Manchmal weiß ich was vom Tag", Illustrationen von Tanja Neljubina; Der Kinderbuchverlag Berlin 1987', in *Beiträge...*93 (1989), pp50-52, (p52).

Herkula depicts a more unremarkable but perhaps more true-to-life account of the seemingly minor difficulties of everyday life. There is no plot as such - only an account of a series of loosely connected events, conveyed almost in the style of a diary. These include her mother's marriage to a neighbour who has a young son by his first marriage, the birth of their baby, the narrator's birthday, a holiday camp. While the plot includes remarriage, in contrast to many stories of the 1970s on this theme, the author does not concentrate on a simple plot of integration. Similarly, the work does not centre around one overriding domestic conflict. Herkula prefers instead to present an authentic picture of a child's experiences of family life in the GDR, subtly highlighting the substantial pressures of day-to-day life and the responsibilities the young faced within the family context.

Like many authors, Herkula touches on the continued stigma attached to single-parent families. In the opening section 'Die erste Reihe' - a reference to the order in which the class walk back to school from the swimming pool - the narrator begins by describing her father, an apparently ideal character:

Mein Vater ist nur für mich da. Darum sieht Mutti manchmal traurig aus. Aber sie braucht sich über nichts zu ärgern, weil wir alles von ihr abwenden, besonders meine schlechten Noten. ... Wenn ich in der ersten Reihe bin und mein Vater mit dem Auto vorbeifährt, fährt er ein Stück ganz langsam, und er winkt mir zu, und er ist fröhlich, und die anderen sagen: "Du hast einen guten Vater!"<sup>30</sup>

The somewhat sudden admission which follows reveals that he is indeed simply an ideal, invented in the face of the social pressure felt by the child of a single-parent:

Ich bin unauffällig; mich beachtet niemand.  
Mein Lehrer hat noch nie gesagt, daß ich in der ersten Reihe gehen darf. Dort sind immer nur die kräftigsten, die mit den besten Zensuren, die mit Mutter und Vater, die immer beide zur Elternversammlung gehen, um ihr Kind zu beschützen.  
Ich habe keinen Vater. Aber das sage ich niemandem.<sup>31</sup>

The author does not present the marriage of the girl's mother as an optimistic conclusion to the story. Instead, she uses the story to highlight

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<sup>30</sup>Birgit Herkula, *Manchmal weiß ich was vom Tag* (Berlin, 1987), p4.

<sup>31</sup>*Ibid.*, p6.

everyday experiences of family life. There is a concentration throughout on the neglect children feel when their parents' other responsibilities lead to a lack of time for the family. Diana is constantly shown to voice her frustration at this, claiming, for example:

Erwachsene müßten viel mehr spielen. Aber dafür haben sie keine Zeit. Vor allem haben sie keine Zeit, weil sie immer noch irgend etwas arbeiten, wenn sie zu Hause sind. Ich verstehe nicht, daß ihnen das gefällt.

"Du bist schon schwierig", sagen meine Eltern manchmal.

Aber ihr seid viel schwieriger, denke ich manchmal.<sup>32</sup>

Through the introduction of other child characters, the author ensures, that the readers are aware that these experiences are not unique. Ellen, whom Diana meets at a holiday camp, describes the limited family life she experiences as the child of a working single mother:

"Meine Mutter arbeitet als Dienstreisende im Maschinenwerk, und wenn sie mal zu Hause ist, geht sie weg und sucht einen Mann."

"Liebe braucht Zeit, da muß man Geduld haben", plappere ich Muttis alten Satz.

"Ich will nicht nach Hause, der Fernseher ist kaputt", sagt Ellen.<sup>33</sup>

As well as pointing to the neglect of children by their parents, Herkula also in this work deals with the pressures their parents' lack of time placed on the young to take on considerable responsibilities at an early age. Ellen, for example, describes her domestic duties:

"Bei uns zu Hause bin ich der Mann, hacke Holz, hole Kohlen aus dem Keller, damit sich meine Mutti mal ausruhen kann, wenn sie von der Arbeit kommt", sagt Ellen.<sup>34</sup>

The narrator speaks more of her moral responsibilities, describing her 'Funktionsplan als Schwester'<sup>35</sup>, her duties with regard to the upbringing of her younger brother. She feels constantly required to act as a good example to him and produces the poignant comment:

Ich bin immer mehr damit beschäftigt, Schwester zu sein, und

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<sup>32</sup>Ibid., p29.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., p60.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., p67.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., p10.



immer weniger Zeit bleibt für mich als Kind.<sup>36</sup>

While such statements reflect the gentle humour of the work, they are not an exaggeration of the way in which many children were taught to see their role. Several entries in the collection *Um sechs Uhr steh ich auf* convey very similar sentiments, one 13-year-old girl, for example, writing:

Ich fühle mich meiner kleinen Schwester verpflichtet. Denn ich soll ihr Vorbild sein und bin dies auch.<sup>37</sup>

Herkula's aim in writing *Manchmal weiß ich was vom Tag* appears to be similar to that of the writers who concentrate on conflict. She makes the readers aware of the problems inherent in everyday family life and arouses sympathy. As Karin Richter suggests, the intended readership is apparently a mixed one. Diana's constant criticisms of adult behaviour are obviously intended to gain both recognition and sympathy from the young readers. However, the author also appears to be attempting to draw adult attention to the child's experiences of family life in the GDR. This is made particularly clear when the narrator focuses at one point on her aim to redress the current situation by becoming an author:

Ich schreibe dann aber über Kinder, damit die Erwachsenen lernen, daß sie nicht die wichtigsten sind auf der Welt, und damit sie uns besser verstehen können. Die Menschen werden mich lieben.<sup>38</sup>

While Herkula's unusual book tells a very quiet story and was unlikely to capture a great degree of public attention, another children's book which appeared in the same year proved by GDR standards to be so sensational in its subject matter that it provoked widespread debate outside the field of those directly involved in children's literature. Günter Saalman's controversial *Umberto* recounts the story of a boy from one of the families termed as 'Asoziale', living on the criminal edges of society, and how his appalling domestic circumstances eventually lead to him being placed in a children's home. While stories about domestic conflict demonstrate a threat to the official role of the family, this work represents the portrayal of the breakdown of the family's role. The book provoked discussion, not least because the circumstances it depicted were all but

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<sup>36</sup>Ibid., p55.

<sup>37</sup> *Um sechs Uhr steh ich auf*, p43.

<sup>38</sup> *Manchmal weiß ich was vom Tag*, p16.



denied in official circles. In a state which placed such emphasis on the success of its social policies, Saalmann's work inevitably caused controversy.

*Umberto* was not the first GDR children's book to mention the neglect and abuse of children. Jürgen Leskien's Georg in the book of the same name was shown to have spent the first five years of his life with an alcoholic mother who was later imprisoned for fraud. In Barbara Kühl's *Irrlichter* Anni Puttbreese notices that a friend of Christian's from the children's home has scars on his hand where his mother has held it against the ring of the cooker. Both incidents, however, are mentioned only fleetingly as incidents from the past and are not vital to the plot. *Umberto* shows the reader everyday details in the life of a neglected 14-year-old. There is no possibility of the family acting as a link between individual and society. In concurrence with Claudia Rouvel's observations about the evening meal table, Umberto is never shown to eat with his single mother, Ilona. For most of the time she languishes in bed with 'Spontanose', which the author defines as a mixture of backache and laziness. It is left to Umberto to feed and wash his weak and undernourished baby sister - the fourth child and the result of another of the mother's brief affairs. The boy sleeps on the floor since his mother has burned his bed after neglecting to order coal for the heating.

Through recounting details such as these from the boy's everyday life, Saalmann portrays the family as the root of all Umberto's problems. Neglected at home, he is rejected by his classmates because of the smell of his unwashed clothes. Desperate for attention, he arrives late at school and flaunts rules and conventions - to the point of sticking a safety pin through his cheek so as to be noticed.

The book inevitably gave rise to the question of whether the description of such squalid circumstances was suitable for children's literature. In an interview with Claudia Rouvel, Saalmann described the opposition he met with at a meeting of trainee Pioneer Leaders whose general opinion seemed to be that, though such events did occur, they were not typical and perhaps therefore not appropriate for children. The publishers appeared to share this view. Although the Kinderbuchverlag provided the initiative for the book - authors were addressed on the matter and given samples of documents relating to various authentic cases - Saalmann met with increasing resistance as time went by, and it took six

years of editing before *Umberto* was published. By this stage, the boy on whom the story was based had left the GDR to settle in West Germany <sup>39</sup>. The editing process involved alterations not only to the text - the illustrator Konrad Golz had to remove a cigarette from Umberto's mouth on the front cover, despite the fact that the boy is shown to smoke several times in the text and is even sold cigarettes by his mother. It would appear that the cover was more heavily censored than the actual text, presumably since it is often the cover which initially draws a reader to a book. The blurb on the back of the book, while not strictly inaccurate, is very misleading and does not prepare the reader for the harsh realities the book contains. It describes an incident when Umberto yet again arrives late for school and concludes:

So beginnt die ungewöhnliche Geschichte eines Jungen, der es schwer hat mit seinem Leben, auf die 'schiefe Bahn' geraten kann, und der versucht, sich aus eigener Kraft zu retten. Irgendwann aber wird ihm bewußt, daß er Hilfe braucht - und sie wird ihm zuteil.  
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These two sentences which emphasise the individual's dependence on society were interestingly omitted from the cover of the West German version, published by the Erika Klopp Verlag in 1989.

Saalmann believed strongly that the young should not be sheltered from unpleasant realities. At the 1988 Theoretical Conference in Magdeburg where the theme was set by Marianne Lange with her paper 'Haben Lügen kurze Beine?', Günter Saalmann gave a paper entitled 'Das brennende Paulinchen' - a reference to a poem from Heinrich Hoffmann's *Struwwelpeter* collection which tells of a young girl who plays with matches, though forbidden to do so, and burns to death. Saalmann pointed out that the tale, though gruesome, had probably saved the lives of generations of children, and that confronting children with unpleasant realities would therefore often serve a purpose. His own intention in writing for children was made clear:

Ich sage, daß es für die Kinderliteratur unseres Landes Zeit ist, jeden Versuch zu unterlassen, die vom Kind erlebte als kontrollierbare Wirklichkeit künstlich - was das Gegenteil von künstlerisch ist - zu bereinigen, glattzukämmen, um das Wort frisieren zu vermeiden.

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<sup>39</sup>Saalmann had begun to write a second volume based on the boy's later experience when his work was interrupted by the events of Unification.

<sup>40</sup>Günter Saalmann, *Umberto* (Berlin, 1987), back cover.

Aufzuhören, Heikeles wie die bekannte heiße Kartoffel zu behandeln, die man erst anfaßt, wenn sie lauwarm ist.<sup>41</sup>

Saalmann's stated intention in writing *Umberto* was to make readers aware of a section of society ignored by the media and to bring their problems to the public's attention. In this he was very successful. The book was much talked about and the discussion which followed its publication included an expansive letter (published in the *Beiträge...*) from sociologist Gunhild Korfes, in which he discussed the characters as real people and focussed on the motivation behind their behaviour. He felt that Saalmann's portrayal represented a true reflection of authentic circumstances, claiming:

Der Zusammenhang zwischen der psychosozialen Fehlentwicklung eines Heranwachsenden und der familiären Situation kann besser kaum dargestellt werden.<sup>42</sup>

Korfes praised *Umberto* for the manner in which the story was told and for the way in which Saalmann had brought the subject matter to public attention. The letter reveals both sympathy with Saalmann's aim and recognition of the potential impact of the book:

Was Günter Saalmann anzielt, ist m.E. eine moralische Kategorie, die uns helfen soll im Kampf gegen die Gleichgültigkeit gegenüber solchen Erscheinungen.<sup>43</sup>

Reviews of the book appeared in most major GDR literary periodicals, not simply those dealing with children's literature. The book gained almost universal praise from children's book specialists, and at the Children's Book Week in Leipzig in 1989 Saalmann was presented with the Maxim Gorki Prize - awarded by the IBBY sections of the socialist countries for works dealing with contemporary everyday life.

The praise centred almost exclusively around the breaking of taboos which Saalmann's work represented. The work did bring to public

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<sup>41</sup>Günter Saalmann, 'Das brennende Paulinchen : Diskussionsbeitrag zur Theoretischen Konferenz des Schriftstellerverbandes der DDR anlässlich der 26. Tage der Kinderliteratur 1988' archive material in DDR-Zentrum für Kinderliteratur, Berlin.

<sup>42</sup>Gunhild Korfes, 'Brief an die Redaktion zu Günter Saalmanns Buch "Umberto"', in *Beiträge...* 93 (1989), pp36-44, (p40).

<sup>43</sup>*Ibid.*, p37.

attention an area of society which had hitherto been ignored. It was remarkable for the reverberations it caused, not only in the field of children's books. However, an examination of the text reveals that the ultimate message of the story is considerably more adherent to official State ideology than could perhaps be expected. Saalman implies throughout that Umberto's behaviour is due to individual irresponsibility in his home life rather than to social circumstances. In discussions of the work, Saalman emphasised the differences between the circumstances of such social groups in the West and in the East, claiming that in the East all were given an equal chance and that failure was due to individuals rather than society. The author was very critical of the abuse of the welfare system - the washing machine Ilona is given to make her life easier is sold in one of her latest lover's shady deals, representatives of the social services are easily duped and the 'Babyjahr', a prized institution in the GDR and one from which the majority of women benefited, encourages Umberto's mother to become lazy and apathetic. His criticism is directed at the fact that Ilona is not forced out of her apathy and that the process of placing Umberto in a home takes so long. The author thus advocates even greater intervention by the State in family life.

While Umberto's problems are attributed to his family background, it is the State which is shown to furnish him with a sense of individual worth when the police provide the boy with an identity card once he has turned fourteen. The author appeared, both in the text and in interviews, to have great faith in the ability of State institutions to fulfil the socialising role in which the family had failed. The adoption of his baby sister and the placing of Umberto in a children's home are thus intended to represent a happy ending to the story. Another character, Aleksandra Krautwein, now happily adopted by a stable family, recalls her 'helle Jahre in Neuensorge'<sup>44</sup>. The home had apparently given her hope after the unhappiness and fear of her early childhood and in no way resembled the prison camp which Umberto is shown to expect. It is doubtful whether young readers will view Umberto's admission to a children's home with optimism. An interview with a 13-year-old boy, examining his thoughts about the book and published in the *Beiträge...*, suggests this to be the case:

Sie werden ausgestoßen, keiner will sie. Statt sie wirklich zu unterstützen, steckt man sie in Heime. Am schlimmsten finde ich, daß Frau Krautwein durch ihre Tochter wußte, wie es im Heim wirklich ist, und trotzdem nichts dagegen unternahm. Sie mußte

<sup>44</sup>Umberto, p81.



wissen, daß er ein Zuhause brauchte. <sup>45</sup>

Saalmann's approach to the relationship between individual and state implies adherence to the belief that society constitutes an ideal towards which the family must strive and that it is the duty of society to correct any misconceptions created in the family context. This is more representative of the ideals of an older generation of GDR authors. Günter Ebert, in an essay about the portrayal of everyday life in GDR children's literature, commented, for example:

Das geistige Fundament des Menschen, seine Lebensneugier und schöpferische Phantasie, wird in der Familie gelegt. Grobe Fehlstellen in der Familienerziehung, die ja zu einem wesentlichen Teil spontan erfolgt, können in anderen Bereichen der Gesellschaft, Schule, Berufsausbildung, Studium, Betriebskollektiven oder während der Armeezeit nur bedingt korrigiert werden. <sup>46</sup>

Despite its ultimate message, *Umberto* played an exceptional role in bringing to public attention the existence of unacceptable social conditions within the GDR. This was one of the few children's books to reach a wider audience than that directly involved in the field of children's books. The work perhaps represented the apex in the removal of taboos from the depiction of family life and as such captured public attention. In retrospect and in comparison to the taboos broken in family stories which have appeared in the West in recent years - Susanne Bösche's *Jenny lives with Eric and Martin* (1983) which caused so much controversy in Britain when published by the Gay Men's Press, for example, or the increasing number of stories about child abuse - the children's works which appeared in the GDR during this period must appear very tame. Taboos were broken, but certain limits were set and certain conventions adhered to. However, in view of the circumstances under which such works appeared, they did represent a significant attempt to draw public attention to areas of dissatisfaction. As shall be seen in the following chapter, this was particularly true of those children's books which dealt with the subject of work. Writing about such areas, in whatever form, indicated criticism of the silence on family problems within society.

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<sup>45</sup>“Er ist irgendwie so alleine...” : Gespräch mit David, 13 Jahre alt’, in *Beiträge...* 89 (1988), pp57-61, (p60).

<sup>46</sup>Günter Ebert, ‘Der Alltag in unserer Kinderliteratur: Ein Überblick’, in *Schauplatz: Aufsätze zur Kinder- und Jugendliteratur und zu anderen Medienkünsten*, edited by Joachim Schmidt (Berlin, 1986), pp7-24, (p12).

## 2. WORK

In contrast to the subject of the family, work was an established theme of children's literature in the GDR from the outset. Given that the GDR defined itself as 'ein sozialistischer Staat der Arbeiter und Bauern' and 'die politische Organisation der Werktätigen in Stadt und Land unter Führung der Arbeiterklasse und ihrer marxistisch-leninistischen Partei' <sup>1</sup>, this concentration on work can hardly be surprising. To a Western reader, the details given in the stories of various jobs and the apparent compulsion on the part of the authors to introduce each adult character by their occupation may appear contrived and inappropriate for the given age range. However, this reflects the status afforded work within the State. The exclusion of children from the world of employment was less extreme than in the West since the GDR's pedagogic principles ensured that work was an intrinsic part of each child's education. Career guidance and the planning of pupils' working futures began as early as the 4th class and from the age of 12 onwards schoolchildren spent two to three hours a week with a specific firm with which each school was encouraged to build up a special relationship. Young readers in the GDR were perhaps therefore more familiar with employment than those of a similar age in the West would be.

In line with the official ideology, work was presented through the education system not simply as an economic necessity but as a basic human need, essential both to the future of society and to the development of the personality. The SED Party Programme of 1976 referred to work as the 'Herzstück der sozialistischen Lebensweise' <sup>2</sup> and Article 24 §2 of the Constitution described it as 'eine ehrenvolle Pflicht für jeden arbeitsfähigen Bürger' <sup>3</sup>. Gerhard Neuner's *Die zweite Geburt: Über Erziehung im Alltag* (1978), dealing with socialisation in the GDR, provides a typical example of the officially propagated view. In a section entitled 'Arbeit - lebensnotwendig im wirklichen Sinne', after enthusing on the question of work and its importance to the individual, the author uses frightening imagery to illustrate the possible consequences for the individual in the capitalist world where employment is not guaranteed:

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<sup>1</sup>Verfassung der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik (Berlin, 1976, 7th edition 1985), Article 1, p9.

<sup>2</sup>Programm der Sozialistischen Einheitspartei Deutschlands (Berlin, 1976), p74.

<sup>3</sup>Verfassung..., p26-27.



Sie halten es sehr häufig nicht lange durch. Greifen zur Heroin-Spritze, stürzen sich von Hochhäusern, landen in der Unterwelt, in den Gefängnissen ... Arbeit ist also im wirklichen Wortsinne lebensnotwendig. Nicht nur für die geschichtliche Entwicklung des Menschen, sondern auch für jeden einzelnen gilt: Ohne Arbeit kein vollwertiges Menschsein, keine Persönlichkeitsentwicklung! Sie ist eines der wichtigsten Menschenrechte! <sup>4</sup>

Neuner immediately follows the above with the story of a severely handicapped young man from Rathenow in the GDR who made significant personal progress after being offered welding work:

Dank vielfältiger Bemühungen unserer Gesellschaft, die die Fürsorge für jeden Menschen ernst nimmt, hat er *über die Arbeit* seinen Weg ins Leben gefunden. <sup>5</sup>

This emotive juxtaposition of images is indicative of the importance attached to work in GDR ideology. Even Anita Grandke's study of the place within society of the family clearly subordinates the latter's importance to the individual in the face of the influence of employment:

Neben der Arbeit und dem Arbeitskollektiv hat die Familie den größten Einfluß auf die Entwicklung des Menschen. <sup>6</sup>

Given the status afforded work within GDR society, it was inevitable that a literature which purported to reflect everyday life in the Republic would address itself extensively to this subject matter. The emphasis of the portrayal, however, shifted noticeably throughout the GDR's existence. In 1974, Katrin Pieper, then deputy editor-in-chief of the Kinderbuchverlag, drew up an overview of the portrayal of the worker in the 25 years of the GDR's children's literature to that date. <sup>7</sup> She outlined two clear phases. The first, from the late-1950s until the mid-1960s, given the necessity of laying the foundations of the State and extolling the virtues of a new system, inevitably involved a concentration on the role and meaning of work within society. Pieper herself is quoted in the collection *Das*

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<sup>4</sup>Gerhard Neuner, *Die zweite Geburt : Über Erziehung im Alltag* (Leipzig, Jena, Berlin, 1978), p120.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p121.

<sup>6</sup>Anita Grandke, *Familienförderung als gesellschaftliche und staatliche Aufgabe* (Berlin, 1986), p8.

<sup>7</sup>Katrin Pieper, 'Arbeitergestalten in der sozialistischen Gegenwartserzählung für Kinder von 11 Jahren an', in *Beiträge...* 31 (1974), pp9-20.

*Kinderbuch : Gedanken und Ansichten* as having written during this period:

Als ein Teil der Nationalliteratur, also den gleichen ethischen und ästhetischen Forderungen unterworfen, findet auch in der Kinderliteratur des sozialistischen Realismus die Arbeit die gleiche ideelle Wertung und künstlerische Gestaltung. So wird die sozialistische Kinderliteratur zu einem wesentlichen Faktor bei der Formung des sozialistischen Menschen, weil sie dazu beiträgt, die Kinder zur Arbeit, diesem Grundbestandteil des sozialistischen Bewußtseins, zu erziehen. Über die emotionale Beeinflussung vermag sie diesen Zug im kindlichen Denken und Fühlen verankern zu helfen.<sup>8</sup>

Children's literature during this phase was, as many of those involved in its creation were later to admit, seen above all in propagandistic terms, as a means of generating enthusiasm for the new State, and depictions of the worker in the children's literature of the period reflect this.

The second, less superficial phase began in 1969 with the publication of children's books such as Benno Pludra's *Tambari* and Joachim Nowotny's *Der Riese im Paradies*, which tended to dwell more on the other official dimension of work - its contribution towards the self-development of the individual. Work was often shown during this phase as a means of finding or regaining one's place in society. Fred Rodrian, author and at that time editor-in-chief of the Kinderbuchverlag, pleaded at the 1969 Theoretical Conference in Dresden for a greater concentration on this aspect. In his 'Katalog des für die Gegenwart zu Bewältigenden' he stated:

Der arbeitende Mensch, die Arbeit als wesentliche Kraft zur Entfaltung, zur Freisetzung der Persönlichkeit, zwischenmenschliche Beziehungen im Bereich der Produktion, Avantgardisten der sozialistischen Arbeit als Helden unserer Zeit - das alles muß (anknüpfend an Neumann und Nowotny und Pludra) mehr und bestimmender der Gegenstand der Literatur für die vor uns liegenden Jahre sein.<sup>9</sup>

Similarly, children's literature expert Christian Emmrich stated at the same conference:

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<sup>8</sup>Quoted in *Das Kinderbuch : Gedanken und Ansichten* edited by Renate Gollmitz (Berlin, 1983), p136.

<sup>9</sup>Fred Rodrian, 'Beginn - Bilanz - Aufgaben', in *Beiträge...* 14 (1970), pp23-35, (p31).

Wir brauchen Bücher, in denen die Wirkung der Arbeit auf die Persönlichkeitsentwicklung, die Psyche des jungen Menschen, seine Sittlichkeit, die Gesamtheit seiner Lebensäußerungen und menschlichen Beziehungen gestaltet ist.<sup>10</sup>

The period which followed did indeed bring a flood of children's books dealing with the effects of work, however in a far less positive sense than Emmrich had intended. The change in literary circumstances in the early 1970s opened the way for a different, more critical portrayal of work. Coupled with the increase in stories with a strongly defined family setting, work came increasingly to be depicted in terms of its detrimental effects on family life. It was in this context that the theme was discussed at the Theoretical Conference in Neubrandenburg in 1986. Attention here focussed above all on the neglect felt by the young as a result of the lack of time work allowed their parents to devote to their families, but also highlighted the predicament of working mothers, saddled with the dual burden of work and domestic responsibilities.

The depiction of the effects of work was extremely widespread in the children's fiction of the 1970s and 1980s. Those children's books discussed below were selected because of the various ways in which they deal specifically with the joint issues of work and family and also because of the influence many of them had on the debate of the issue of work by children's book specialists, both at the Theoretical Conference in 1986 and in subsequent articles.

### The effects of work on family life

From the mid-1970s onwards, the two themes of work and the family became inextricably linked in GDR children's fiction. The issue of work was introduced to the young protagonists and thus the young readers through the parent figures. In such stories generally little is said about the actual working day itself and there is surprisingly little mention of or portrayal of work colleagues. This has the effect of further emphasising the authors' concentration on the disruptions caused to family life by work commitments.

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<sup>10</sup>Christian Emmrich, 'Ethisch-ästhetische Ansprüche der sozialistischen Gesellschaft an die Kinder- und Jugendliteratur von morgen', in *Beiträge...* 14 (1970), pp36-41, (p37).

This approach to the issue of work was not restricted to any specific age group. At the Kinderbuchverlag's conference on picture books in Weimar in 1988 it was made clear that even in books for the youngest readers work was shown to be detached from 'real' life and was often used to emphasise a lack of emotional warmth.<sup>11</sup>

The overall picture presented of work was that it prevented parents from spending more time with their children, subsequently led to a lack of communication, and engendered a feeling of neglect among the young. Such portrayals met with the disapproval of some critics who saw the argumentation as too simplistic. Steffen Peltsch, at the 1980 Theoretical Conference, stated:

Mir will nicht gefallen, daß wir indirekt die Tatsache, daß Eltern arbeiten, mit der Tatsache koppeln, daß aus Zeitmangel es auch der Kommunikation entbehren muß. Hier wird wohl doch ein Ding der Quantität zu einem der Qualität umfunktioniert, - dialektisch und wahr ist das nicht. Das riecht ein wenig nach Entfremdung.<sup>12</sup>

The focus, as Peltsch states, was on the lack of communication between parents and child. More often than not, those books dealing with work and its effects on family life were set in two-parent families. This served to emphasise the sense of isolation experienced by the child character. Relationships between parents in these books are often seen to be strained, but the adults are generally shown to sympathise with each other and work commitments rarely lead to the neglect of the partner. Work was instead shown as a bond between the parents which excluded the child.

As a direct result of this, the reader's immediate sympathies therefore lie with the child character, particularly since the consequences of their predicament are often shown to be serious. Both Christa Kožik's *Moritz in der Litfaßsäule* (1980) and Barbara Kühl's *Martin oder Zwei linke Hände* (1982) portray young central characters who feel so neglected that they run away from home, while in Jutta Schlott's *Früh und Spät* (1982) the

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<sup>11</sup>Marianne Rautenberg, 'Bericht über die Bilderbuchkonferenz des Kinderbuchverlages in Weimar vom 24. bis 26. 5. 1988 : Ein Stück Utopie auch im Bilderbuch?', in *Kinderliteratur-Report* 2/1988, pp53-55, (p55).

<sup>12</sup>Steffen Peltsch, 'Wie fängt man einen Helden? Überlegungen zur Heldenwahl und -gestaltung in der Kinder- und Jugendliteratur der DDR von 1970 bis 1979 (Referat zur Theoretischen Konferenz des Schriftstellerverbandes der DDR anlässlich der Tage der Kinder- und Jugendliteratur 1980)', DDR-Zentrum für Kinderliteratur archive.



neglected central character Olaf is caught stealing from the supermarket. In each of these stories the neglect which leads to these crises is attributed unequivocally to the parents' work commitments.

Barbara Kühl's *Martin* relates to others that, because of their work, his parents consider him to be 'die größte Nebensache von der Welt' <sup>13</sup> and feels that they treat him 'wie eine lästige Fliege' <sup>14</sup>. Similarly, in Kožík's story for the over-10s, descriptions of the central character Moritz' home life focus on the fact that his mother works by day in a shoe shop and studies in the evenings, while his father, a bank manager, spends his evenings in his study with a sign on the door reading 'Bitte nicht stören', both starving the boy of the attention he craves.

In each book the fact that the situation is felt by the child to be so unbearable that he runs away from home inevitably leads the parent figures to reconsider their behaviour and priorities. Here a further advantage of setting such stories in two-parent families can be seen. In depicting conversations between adult characters in which they express their feelings and dissatisfaction to their partner, authors were able to give young readers greater insight into the world of work and its effects on the adult psyche. Both authors provide scenes in which the adults deliberate on their work, its effects on the family and the various ways in which they could organise their time. Each leads the reader to recognise the burdens placed on parents because of their commitments at work and to contemplate possible solutions to the situations described.

Just as the young reader is expected to sympathise with the difficulties faced by the adult characters, so it is implied within the stories that some degree of compromise must also be made on the part of the child. Although it is evident in each that the adults will attempt to redress the situation, both books imply that the child must also reconsider its position. Both Kühl and Kožík introduce elderly working-class characters who teach the boys of the personal and economic necessity of work, and this enables the children to return home at the end of the story, willing to make compromises in their demands of their parents.

This convention was much used by authors to contrive a solution to

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<sup>13</sup>Barbara Kühl, *Martin oder Zwei linke Hände* (Berlin, 1982), p143.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, p55.



the problem portrayed. Often, particularly in stories with a single-parent setting, where adult conversations could not so readily be portrayed, young characters are given insight into their parents' responsibilities by watching them at work, and consequently were shown to develop admiration for their achievements and understanding for their behaviour and lack of time. The aim appears to be to educate the child about the problems adults face and the reasons for their behaviour. The stance appears almost to have been one of self-justification on the part of the adult writers and reflects the precedence given to work above all else in GDR ideology. Dietrich Schuckmann's essay on socialisation in the collection *Schauplatz ...* provides a typical example of this approach:

Aber auch in der sozialistischen Gesellschaftsformation ist die Sozialisationskraft der Familie den Bedingungen und Wirkungen der industriellen Warenproduktion unterworfen. ... Auch in unserem Lande sind die Väter und Mütter auf Arbeitsstellen außerhalb des Familienkreises, meist in einer Tätigkeit, die den Kindern verborgen und fremd bleibt. Aber ebenso liegt auf der Hand: Die Väter und Mütter dieses Landes arbeiten unter sozialistischen Produktionsverhältnissen, in der Sicherheit, mit ihrer Arbeit auch für die Kinder die Zukunft zu bauen. Aus der grundsätzlichen weltanschaulich-politischen Übereinstimmung zwischen Familienbewußtsein und öffentlichem Bewußtsein kann eine qualitativ neue Sozialisationskraft erwachsen.<sup>15</sup>

In showing the child prepared to accept willingly the unfavourable circumstances occasioned by work commitments, authors detracted from any criticism of the system inherent in the depiction of such circumstances.

Further concessions to the official ideology appear to have been made in the choice of work assigned to the various characters within these children's stories. As with the stories of divorce, it could be argued, for example, that in Kühl and Kožík's books the portrayal of work and its effects involved a great deal of social stereotyping. Just as in stories such as Bahre's *Der Dicke und Ich*, it was suggested that working-class characters made better parents than those involved in intellectual work, so it is implied here that neglect as a result of work occurs principally among the intellectual classes. Moritz, whose father is a bank manager, and Martin, the son of a lecturer, are neglected but find sympathy and understanding

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<sup>15</sup>Dietrich Schuckmann, 'Lust und Mut zum Selbst- und Anders-Sein', in *Schauplatz : Aufsätze zur Kinder- und Jugendliteratur und zu anderen Medienkünsten*, edited by Joachim Schmidt, pp37-44, (p41).

with older, working-class characters. Martin's friend Tante Wally, who works in the egg production centre, and the streetsweeper who befriends Moritz are both dedicated to their work but always find time, patience and sympathy for the young central characters when this is required. They also provide the young readers with a more positive attitude towards work. From the streetsweeper, for example, Moritz learns that work should be both productive and enjoyable:

Mein Vater sagt immer, wenn ich in der Schule nicht besser lerne, kriege ich keinen guten Beruf und muß Straßenfeger werden ... Wenn du glücklich bist dabei, wäre es nicht das Schlechteste, meinte der Straßenfeger. Es ist doch gleich, was man tut, nur wie man es tut, darauf kommt es an, und daß man es mit Freude tut. Ob man Direktor der Sparkasse ist wie dein Vater, oder ob man Korn sät oder die Straße fegt. Hauptsache, man ist glücklich und fühlt, daß man gebraucht wird. <sup>16</sup>

It is unclear why authors continued to pursue this convention, particularly given that, almost without exception, they themselves belonged to the intellectual and academic classes and benefited from many of the material advantages which, when portrayed in their works, led characters to become unreliable and neglectful. While quantity should not be confused with quality, it is clear that work of all kinds detract from the amount of time which parents are able to spend with their children. As children's comments in the collection *Um sechs Uhr steh ich auf* make clear, this applies to all fields of employment and is particularly true of shift work. One 13-year-old girl wrote:

Am schönsten ist es, wenn ich mit meinen Eltern am Kaffeetisch sitzen kann und wir uns das Neueste erzählen. Das kommt leider selten vor, denn meine Eltern sind Schichtarbeiter. <sup>17</sup>

The adherence of most authors to the view that the wealthier social classes were more likely to neglect their children because of work commitments was perhaps one reason for the critical success of Jutta Schlott's *Früh und Spät* (1982), possibly the only GDR children's book to deal extensively with the effect of shift work on the family. The book, for the 10 and over age group, constituted a major point of debate at the Theoretical Conference in Neubrandenburg in 1986, where it was described

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<sup>16</sup>Christa Kožik, *Moritz in der Litfaßsäule* (Berlin, 1980), pp79-80.

<sup>17</sup> *Um sechs Uhr steh ich auf* edited by Katrin Pieper (Berlin, 1979), p47.

by Claudia Rouvel as an 'offene Frage an die Gesellschaft' <sup>18</sup>. While stories such as *Martin oder Zwei linke Hände* and *Moritz in der Litfaßsäule* imply that a solution to the situation described can be reached through the reorganisation of individual schedules and demands, Schlott's book is more far-reaching in its implications. Seen by children's literature specialists in the GDR as the definitive children's book on the subject of work and its effects on the family, the story relates in diary form two weeks in the life of a family which has moved from Borna, where the grandparents were able to help with the care of the children, to a town in Mecklenburg because both parents were able to find better work there, the father as an electrician, the mother in a supervisory position in a handbag factory. The book's title arises from the alternate shifts they work.

Olaf, the central child character is shown to attribute his difficulties solely to his parents' work commitments, in particular the shift system:

"Sven? Weißt du was? Ich finde Schicht Scheiße!"

"Wieso?" Sven tat dumm.

"Na, weil sie nie mehr zusammen zu Hause sind", erklärte Olaf bereitwillig, "immer bloß einer! Wenn Mutti Spät hat, sehen wir sie manchmal die ganze Woche nicht ..., bloß daß sie zum Frühstück mal guckt. Und dann ist sie müde und meckert auch noch ... Und am Wochenende wollen sie ausschlafen und ihre Ruhe haben" ...

"Das ist eben so! Wenn sie sich nicht abwechseln würden, wär bei Spät überhaupt niemand zu Hause." <sup>19</sup>

Taking Claudia Rouvel's criterion of the evening meal table as a measure of the stability or otherwise of family relationships, it is significant that, because of the shift system, the whole family come together for meals only at the weekends and these are dominated by the mother's emotional exhaustion and irascibility.

Schlott does not over-simplify matters. She makes clear that the effect of the parents' work on children varies according to the age of the child. Here three children are involved, each reacting to a differing degree. Gustav, the youngest, is at kindergarten and, except for the occasional outburst of jealousy of the 'Mittagskinder' there, who go home to their families in the afternoons, is too young to be overly affected and

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<sup>18</sup>Claudia Rouvel, 'Diskussionsbeitrag zur Theoretischen Konferenz zu den 24. Tagen der Kinder- und Jugendliteratur im Bezirk Neubrandenburg', p3, DDR-Zentrum für Kinderliteratur archive.

<sup>19</sup>Jutta Schlott, *Früh und Spät* (Berlin, 1982), p16.

perhaps receives more attention from his parents because of his age. Sven, the oldest child, is old enough to have earned a certain degree of independence and adjusts with few problems. He appears able to share his parents' fatalistic attitude towards the family situation, reflected in the motto on the cover illustration 'Was sein muß, muß sein!'. It is Olaf, in the middle, who feels particularly neglected. One poignant scene shows him smelling his mother's dressing gown - the presence of her scent in the house underlining her absence. The boy is unable to adapt to the new surroundings or to share the family's complacency.

Schlott's work realistically provides no specific or lasting solution to the family's problems. After Olaf's problems have reached crisis point - his school work deteriorates dramatically and he is caught stealing cigarettes from the supermarket - there is some effort at a superficial solution in the form of a short family holiday together. As the mother comments:

"Damit man sieht, daß es noch was anderes gibt als Arbeit und Taschen und Wäschewaschen..." <sup>20</sup>

Although all characters at the end of the story are shown to be aware of the problems caused by the parents' work, the reader could easily be inclined to agree with Sven when, reluctantly consenting to the holiday, he comments:

"Am Montag geht die ganze alte Scheiße sowieso wieder los!" <sup>21</sup>

The motivation behind this children's book is perhaps slightly different from others such as *Moritz in der Litfaßsäule* and *Martin oder Zwei linke Hände*. The latter imply that a degree of compromise is expected of the young in situations such as this. Here, however, the expectations are expressed by the parents themselves and the story questions whether such expectations are reasonable. The mother stresses that to continue with her work she must be able to rely on her children, while the father suggests that the children should learn to recognise that the advantages of their new lifestyle, made possible through work, should outweigh the difficulties faced:

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<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p92.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p95.



“daß wir hierhergezogen sind, das haben wir doch auch für euch getan. Damit wir die schöne Wohnung bekommen. Und daß wir mehr Geld verdienen. Vielleicht können wir uns nächstes Jahr schon das Auto kaufen. Alles, was wir machen, machen wir doch auch für euch!”<sup>22</sup>

In contrast to Kühl's and Kožik's works, which show the child to accept compromise, albeit reluctantly, Schlott's book leads the reader to question whether it is right to require this of the young. It is clear that the material comfort of which the father speaks does not compensate for the neglect which Olaf feels.

The question arises from the many portrayals of work as a disruptive force to family life as to the suitability of this subject matter for young readers. As with the field of family problems, many children's authors felt that anything which affected children in real life should be appropriate material for children's fiction and that, where discontent had begun to be felt in certain areas of society, this should be aired. The extent of the portrayals of family problems as a result of work commitments imply that social dissatisfaction in this area was widespread. However, although this is a problem which has very serious effects on the young, it remains essentially an adult problem against which the young were powerless to act. In *Früh und Spät*, the constant reiteration of the fatalistic attitude of the characters that they have to accept their situation leads the reader to question whether this is, in fact, the case, yet, having been made aware of the difficulties, there was little that the young could do. It is possible that authors were aiming their message at the adults of the future - a trend increasingly found in children's books during the 1980s, particularly, as shall be seen in the following chapter, those dealing with socialisation. Perhaps the intention was also to reach an adult audience - the issue succeeded in generating much discussion at the Theoretical Conference in 1986, indicating the way in which children's literature was used to debate social issues and indeed social policy. One aspect on which several speakers, including Schlott herself, focussed was the fact that the majority of the family's problems and the neglect of the young were commonly, as in Schlott's story, attributed to the fact that the mother works. There was a tendency in the children's literature of this period to differentiate strongly between fathers and mothers in both their attitude towards work and in the effects of this work on the family.

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<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p90.



## Working mothers

Throughout the GDR's existence, legislation had been instituted to attempt to create equality between the sexes at work and to alleviate the burden of women who were expected to work and be responsible for the household. Ordinance 23 of the Soviet Military Administration in Germany (17th August, 1946) had stipulated equal pay for equal work regardless of sex, and this was consolidated in Article 24 of the GDR's first Constitution. With the reduced male population resulting from the Second World War, working women were an economic necessity and continued to be so in the light of the constantly dwindling population of the GDR. This necessity had been couched in ideological terms in the Constitution and in subsequent family law. Article 20, §2 of the Constitution stated:

Mann und Frau sind gleichberechtigt und haben die gleiche Rechtstellung in allen Bereichen des gesellschaftlichen, staatlichen und persönlichen Lebens. Die Förderung der Frau, besonders in der beruflichen Qualifizierung, ist eine gesellschaftliche und staatliche Aufgabe. <sup>23</sup>

Since women were simultaneously encouraged by the State to work, to have children and to gain qualifications, it was clear that legislation was necessary to alleviate some of the triple burden. The Party Conference of 1971, which focussed on family problems, and the resultant Party Programme attempted seriously to tackle the situation. Considerable efforts were made to provide sufficient creche, kindergarten and after-school care places for the children of working mothers. By the early 1980s 70% of young children could be cared for in this way - an impressive figure when seen alongside those of, for example, the USSR with 30% and West Germany with 9%. <sup>24</sup> Further measures included the introduction of the 'Haushaltstag', granting one free day per month to all married women and all single women over the age of 40, and the 'Babyjahr' which initially enabled young mothers to take a year's paid holiday after the birth of their second child or 3 years unpaid with the guarantee of a job at the end of that period, and which was extended in 1986 to include all working mothers.

As a result of the various measures, the actual number of working

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<sup>23</sup>Verfassung ..., p24.

<sup>24</sup>See Ludwig Liegle *Welten der Kindheit und Familie : Beiträge zu einer pädagogischen und kulturvergleichenden Sozialisationsforschung* (Weinheim and Munich, 1987), p148.

women rose substantially over the years so that by the mid-1980s almost 90% of mothers with young children worked (as opposed to 34% in West Germany).<sup>25</sup> Many women in the West viewed the legislation governing work in the GDR in idealised terms. G. E. Edwards, for example wrote:

The wife's income not only supplements the family finances and raises the family's standard of living but also gives her economic independence from her husband and the self-confidence which goes with it and which also develops from having a social status outside the family. This latter factor in itself leads to new relationships between partners themselves and between them and the children.<sup>26</sup>

This image is far removed from the impression of work and its effects given in the GDR's children's books and reflected in the debate which they engendered. It fails to take into account both the lack of time work allowed for the family, particularly where shift work was involved<sup>27</sup>, and the domestic burden of working mothers.

The necessity for the legislation on the employment of women and the nature of its execution (the 'Haushaltstag' for example for all its apparent advantages was rarely granted to men) emphasise the prevailing social attitudes towards working women. The *Familiengesetzbuch* required couples :

ihre Beziehungen zueinander so zu gestalten, daß beide das Recht auf Entfaltung ihrer Fähigkeiten zum eigenen und gesellschaftlichen Nutzen voll wahrnehmen können.<sup>28</sup>

The very fact that it was necessary to embody this concept in a law indicates that attitudes had failed to change over the years. The household was clearly seen as the woman's responsibility and women in general were more willing to make sacrifices at work for the sake of their family. Edwards' own surveys showed a vast imbalance in the division of the

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<sup>25</sup>See Ludwig Liegle, p147.

<sup>26</sup>G. E. Edwards, *GDR Society and Social Institutions : Facts and Figures* (London and Basingstoke, 1985), p2.

<sup>27</sup>Edwards' own surveys showed that while 19.2% of non-shift female production workers found they had not enough time for their children and 23.2% generally little or no time with their partner, these figures among women in the 2 or 3 shift system rose to 27.9% and 42.8% respectively. See G. E. Edwards, p86.

<sup>28</sup>*Familiengesetzbuch der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik*, Ministerium der Justiz (Berlin, 1982), §2.

housework between partners. <sup>29</sup>

Various surveys carried out among children showed that these stereotyped roles were very firmly entrenched, linking beer-drinking, watching television and reading the newspaper to the figure of the father and washing-up, sewing on buttons and cleaning with the mother. They also made clear that girls carried out a far greater percentage of the housework than did boys. Helmut Stolz in his advice book for parents *Wie soll dein Kind sein?* claimed that this often amounted to girls enjoying four to five hours less free time a week than boys. <sup>30</sup>

When GDR children's literature came to focus on the effects of work on family life, the figure of the overburdened working mother, attempting to cope with her job, the household and often with studies too, began to dominate. Karin Richter, acknowledging the frequency of the image, questioned the motives behind it:

Allerdings drängt sich die Frage auf, ob Autoren in ihrer Kunstwelt das Rollenverhalten in dieser Weise gestalten, um Änderungen in der realen Welt zu initiieren, oder ob sie selbst diesen Mustern folgen. <sup>31</sup>

Analysing the various texts for children reveals a divergence of apparent motives. Several do appear simply to reflect conventional attitudes. Since authors aimed elsewhere to question conventional viewpoints in children's literature, it could perhaps be expected that some attempt would be made to portray role reversal in order to make some inroad into changing the received attitudes which caused so many problems for working women. Very few such attempts can be found. Many stories did deal critically with the dual, often triple, burden of young working mothers, making young readers aware of the difficulties faced, but the very fact that so many dealt with the subject can only have given readers the overall impression that the woman's job generally constituted a serious problem, disrupting family life and requiring compromise, on her

<sup>29</sup> 84.2% of the preparation of meals, for example, was carried out by the female and only 6.8% by the male. For washing these figures stood at 89.7% to 2.9% and even for shopping the discrepancy was great - 76.5% to 11.8%. See GE Edwards, p38.

<sup>30</sup> Helmut Stolz, *Wie soll dein Kind sein?* (Berlin, 1988), p44.

<sup>31</sup> Karin Richter, 'Soziale Erkundungen in der Kinder- und Jugendliteratur', in *DDR-Literatur '87 im Gespräch*, edited by Siegfried Rönisch (Berlin und Weimar, 1988), pp76-90, (p76).

part or often on the part of the children.

The portrayals of working women focus above all on their exhaustion and on the subordination of their working ambitions to their family responsibilities. Many works of this period simply describe a traditional domestic situation, with no apparent attempt to question or judge the circumstances depicted. The women in these stories are generally shown to be exhausted by the combination of work and domestic duties. In *Moritz in der Litfaßsäule*, for example, the mother's burden is a triple one : she works during the day in a shoe shop, is constantly busy with her studies in the evening, and it is made clear that she takes sole responsibility for the housework:

Nun hatte Mama so wenig Zeit, denn wenn sie von der Arbeit kam, war sie mit Einkaufen, Kochen, Abwaschen und Wäschewaschen beschäftigt. Danach saß sie am Tisch, hatte viele Bücher um sich, daß man sie kaum sah, stöhnte und raufte sich die Haare und murmelte: "Das kapiere ich nie." <sup>32</sup>

Concern over Moritz' absence leads both parents to determine to make changes. However, while the father tears up the sign on his study door, it is the mother who compromises, clears away her books, and postpones her studies until the children are older:

"Wir müssen mehr Zeit für die Kinder haben. Für ihre Fragen und für ihre Wünsche. Sie brauchen das. Vor allem Moritz. Später werde ich vielleicht weitermachen. Wenn sie größer sind." <sup>33</sup>

This is typical of many works of the period which depicted women subordinating their own career interests to those of their partners, a trend so widespread that it appeared to represent a norm.

While the implication was commonly made in children's stories that the combined responsibilities of work and household exhausted mothers, several works appear to suggest that it is the work itself which drains these women. In Dietmar Beetz' *Familien-Theater* (1984) - the story of one family's attempt to overcome its apparent differences by working together to give a theatrical performance for their neighbours - family life is clearly chronicled and the fact is constantly underlined that the housework is evenly divided within the family, so that it is not unusual for

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<sup>32</sup>Christa Kožik, *Moritz in der Litfaßsäule* (Berlin, 1980), pp9-10.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., p105.

the father to shop, prepare the evening meal and wash up. Despite this, the mother, although generally depicted as sympathetic, is shown to be so exhausted by her work at the hospital that, when she has time, she is unable to give her full attention to the children:

“Kommst du noch ein wenig kuscheln? Bitte, Mami!”

“Schön. Aber nur fünf Minuten!”

Tina behielt das Leuchtzifferblatt im Auge, während sie flüsternd erzählte. Plötzlich stockte sie. Die Mutter schnarchte leise. Es waren erst drei Minuten und zweiunddreißig Sekunden um. <sup>34</sup>

The image of working men and the effects of the father's work on the family provides young readers with a clear contrast. Their work colleagues give them heroic nicknames such as ‘Der Stürmer’ in Bernd Wolff's *Biberspur* or ‘Der Eiserne’ in Preuß' *Tschomolungma*. Work is integral to their lives and they are shown to be incapable of spending time at home. In both Pludra's *Insel der Schwäne* (1980), and Preuß' *Julia* (1976), the fathers, forced to take some time off work through injury, are unable to stay away from work long enough to recover fully.

Similarly, the effects of their work on family life are minimised. When the father in *Familien-Theater*, after his extensive preparations, has his proposal for a doctorate turned down, since the firm cannot afford a second psychologist, his wife and family are insistent that he goes ahead with it. Although continuing the doctorate alone will mean that the father's free time for the next 6 to 7 years will be limited, and despite the fact that the family are already experiencing difficulties because of their inability to use their time together effectively, the implication is that the father's work must take precedence over his responsibilities for the family.

No apparent judgement was made by authors when portraying the way in which family life can be disrupted because of the father's work. Jürgen Leskien's *Rote Elefanten und grüne Wolken für Till* (1976, for the over-7s) tells the story of Till, whose mother has died, and who is alone on holiday with his father. The holiday motif in itself is unusual since the vast majority of children's stories appear to be set at home. When the father receives a telegram, requiring him to return urgently to pilot a flight to Africa, he apparently has no qualms about leaving his young son alone for a few days and returning immediately to Berlin. The father

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<sup>34</sup>Dietmar Beetz, *Familien-Theater* (Berlin, 1984), p29.



places work before the family, but the adventure Till enjoys and the interesting people he meets demonstrate no moral judgement of the father's behaviour on the part of the author. It is unlikely that a story portraying a single mother and her son would have progressed in the same manner.

A similar attitude towards the father's work is displayed in Arwed Bouvier's *Mein allerbesten Zwillingsbruder* (1983, 12+), in which Michael Sorgenicht relates the emotional difficulties faced by the family, especially by his twin brother Robert, due to the fact that the father is away at sea. Here the family problems are caused not so much by a lack of time but by a lack of emotional stability due to the father's absence. The mother's position, despite the high degree of independence and emotional strength afforded by her situation, is constantly subordinated throughout the book to that of her husband.

"Ich bin Seemann", sagte Vater.  
Ich hatte noch niemals gehört, daß Mutter etwas Ähnliches sagte:  
Ich bin Bibliothekarin, oder so. Eher würde sie wohl noch sagen,  
daß sie eine Seemannsfrau sei. Mutter war wohl doch ein bißchen  
stolz darauf, eine Seemannsfrau zu sein.<sup>35</sup>

It is made clear that the father's job is integral to his being while hers is merely an occupation, and the young central character is shown to learn to appreciate this and to forgo his original demands that his father return to live with the family.

While many children's authors simply reflected conventional thinking in their portrayal of domestic roles, some few did attempt to address this issue more critically. Gunter Preuß' *Julia* (1976), a lengthy book which attempts to cover a vast range of topics, was one of the first children's books to deal critically with the effects of work on family life and the problem of working mothers, and Preuß was one of the few authors to provide an unambiguous criticism of received sexual roles. Central to the book is the conflict within Julia's family between the mother, who works as a tram driver, and the father, who wants her to take a less demanding office job because he feels she is devoting too little time to himself, their daughter and their home. Set in the context of Julia's gradual discovery of the importance of self-determination, which shall be dealt with in more detail in the following chapter, the author's criticism is

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<sup>35</sup>Arwed Bouvier, *Mein allerbesten Zwillingsbruder* (Berlin, 1983), p72.

directed solely at restrictive patriarchal attitudes, such as that expressed by the father when it is suggested that perhaps he instead could take a less time-consuming job:

“Ich? Wo soll ich denn arbeiten? Das ist wohl ein Witz, was! Ich bin Brauer. In die Brauerei gehöre ich, nirgend woandershin! Bei mir ist das doch ganz was anderes. Du - du bist eben eine Frau. Nicht daß das weniger wäre als ein Mann. Im Gegenteil. Auf euch lastet weitaus mehr. Darum gerade sollst du doch eine leichtere Arbeit machen. Damit du auch für die anderen Dinge Zeit hast, für mich und Julia zum Beispiel.”<sup>36</sup>

Despite her love of her job, Julia's mother is prepared by the end of the story to compromise her own ambitions in favour of her family - a motif common to the children's literature of the time. In contrast to the majority of cases, however, Preuß makes it clear at this point that this way of thinking should not be condoned. Julia's father manages to overcome his traditional way of thinking, sees the significance of her work for his wife and insists that she carries on with the job she enjoys and which is essential to her personal development.

The father's comments on the revision of his patriarchal attitudes imply that these attitudes are widespread within society:

“Weißt du, mein Mädchen, ein bißchen steckt in den Männern noch der alte Adam, von dem die Bibel sagt, daß aus einer Rippe von ihm die Eva gemacht wurde und er ihr Herr sein solle. Ich will sagen - ich habe doch einiges begriffen. Etwas klüger ist dein Alter geworden, altes Mädchen.”<sup>37</sup>

In depicting the dismissal of such attitudes, Preuß questions the assumption that a woman should subordinate her career to her family.

The transformation of the father's attitudes which Preuß portrays is rare, but not unexpected from an author who almost exclusively focuses on female protagonists. Female authors who began to enter the male-dominated world of children's literature during the 1970s and 1980s often presented a slightly different and more complex approach to the subject of working women. Barbara Köhl tended to concentrate on male protagonists, but was able, through secondary female characters, to break received

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<sup>36</sup>Gunter Preuß, *Julia* (Berlin, 1976), p328.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., p416.

female role patterns. Her children's story *Martin oder Zwei linke Hände* is told from Martin's point of view, but Kühl also occasionally gives the young readers interesting insight into the adult characters' thoughts and depicts several of their conversations about work. Kühl portrays a woman who is no longer prepared to subordinate her career to her family and decides to resume her ambition of becoming a translator. Gottfried Lembke's reaction to his wife's decision is very similar to that of Julia's father, but is reinforced by the arrogance and narrow-mindedness often attributed to the intelligentsia in GDR children's literature:

“Ich will nicht, daß du auch noch zu Hause arbeitest!”  
“Du arbeitest ja auch zu Hause!” verteidigte sich die Mutter ungeschickt.  
“Also ... Maria! Das ist doch etwas völlig anderes! Ich bin schließlich Lehrer! Das ist dir hoffentlich nicht entgangen” blaffte Gottfried Lembke.<sup>38</sup>

Kühl makes clear to the readers that the mother's decision will involve her being away from home three evenings a week and that this will cause great disruption to family life. However, the family problems appear to be attributed mainly to the husband's attitude. Kühl makes a very clear distinction between the male and female viewpoints shown in the story. The father invariably places his work before his family, even using it as an excuse to avoid his son.

Sieht aus, als hätte er schon wieder ein schlechtes Gewissen, der Bengel! huschte es Gottfried Lembke durch den Sinn, aber im nächsten Augenblick hatte er seinen Sohn vergessen. Kybernetik - eine komplizierte Angelegenheit!<sup>39</sup>

In contrast, the mother's thoughts about work are intended to evoke more sympathy with the reader since her conscience is less willing to allow her to concentrate on her job more than on her family:

War es richtig, die Sprachkundigenprüfung ablegen zu wollen und mit fünfundvierzig Jahren noch einmal umzusatteln? Bin ich zu ehrgeizig? Bin ich egoistisch? grübelte Maria Lembke. Will ich mir um jeden Preis nur einen alten Wunschtraum erfüllen?<sup>40</sup>

Through a polarised portrayal of the parents, the author creates

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<sup>38</sup>Barbara Kühl, *Martin oder Zwei linke Hände* (Berlin, 1982), p43.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., p86.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., p105.

sympathy for the mother and antipathy towards the father. This and the apparent reconciliation towards the end of the story (albeit to some extent at Martin's expense) appear to imply that the father's original attitude was at fault. Like Preuß', Kühl's criticism, although less direct, is aimed at attitudes and traditional ways of organising family life.

Jutta Schlott's *Früh und Spät* also attempts to convey to young readers the dilemma of working mothers. The character of the mother was highly praised in reviews of the book. Claudia Rouvel, for example, at the Theoretical Conference in Neubrandenburg stated:

Ich glaube, Jutta Schlott ist hier eine im ästhetischen Sinne 'typische' Frauenfigur unserer Zeit gelungen. <sup>41</sup>

and later commented in the West German periodical *Eselsohr*:

Die schweigende, erschöpfte oder explodierende Mutter am Abendbrottisch zeigt keine Momentaufnahme, sondern einen Dauerzustand. Die Brisanz der Geschichte lebt nicht zuletzt von dieser differenziert gestalteten Frauenfigur, die sich vom tradierten Frauenbild wesentlich unterscheidet. <sup>42</sup>

The figure was generally recognised by critics as an authentic one, drawn directly from GDR life. Her work leaves her permanently exhausted and irritable so that the family have to make great efforts to keep noise to a minimum. Her emotional outbursts are fearsome and dreaded. She is shown to be aware of her faults but unable to act against them. The figure of the father and his influence upon the family provides a stark contrast:

Wenn Vater Frühschicht hatte, war es zu Hause ruhiger. Der Vater schimpfte selten. <sup>43</sup>

He is more capable of delegating responsibilities such as shopping, and also depicted as able to relax in the evening, which has a calming effect on the family. However, it is above all his mother's presence which the young protagonist is shown to miss:

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<sup>41</sup>Claudia Rouvel, 'Diskussionsbeitrag...', p8.

<sup>42</sup>Claudia Rouvel, 'Abendbrottische in DDR-Kinderbüchern : Beobachtungen zum Bild der Familie in Büchern der 80er Jahre', in *Eselsohr*, 2/90, pp11-12, (p11).

<sup>43</sup>*Früh und Spät*, p23.

Ohne Mutter war alles nur halb. <sup>44</sup>

Schlott constantly emphasises the mother's responsibility for the young children and in doing so highlights for the reader the difficulties involved in the combined role of worker and mother. Insight into the mother's position is conveyed most vividly through the occasional glimpses of conversations between the two parents. The mother, for example, is clearly frustrated by the sacrifices she has made in her career because of her children:

"Ich wollte damals so gerne meinen Meister machen. Und dann kam Sven. Und dann waren die Kinder klein! Und immer war was! ... Ich will auch noch mal was anfangen in meinem Leben!" <sup>45</sup>

Schlott uses the conversations between the adult figures to emphasise the fact that social attitudes viewed the subordination of a woman's career to her family as the norm:

"Vierzehn Jahre lang bin ich es, die sich immer zuerst um die Kinder kümmert. Gerne! Verstehst du - gerne! ... Hat dich schon ein einziges Mal, wenn du zu deinen Gewerkschaftslehrgängen fährst, jemand gefragt: Und die Kinder?"

"Gerda, du *bist* nun mal die Mutter", sagte der Vater verärgert. "Und du?" Die Mutter sah auf. Die Tränen liefen in zwei Rinnsalen über ihr Gesicht. "Du bist nun mal der Vater", sagte sie böse. <sup>46</sup>

Rather than providing a clear-cut solution, such as Preuß does in *Julia*, Schlott's aim seems to have been to draw attention to a particular social dilemma and to provoke thought on possible means of alleviating the problem. While Olaf's difficulties will find sympathy with readers of any age, the message on the whole appears to be a plea to the adult world to consider not only the stress faced by working mothers but the emotional effects their careers can have on the remaining members of the family and the neglect faced by children whose parents work shifts. Hannelore Hilzheimer in her review in the *Beiträge...* described the book as:

ein Bekenntnis zu gesellschaftlicher Verantwortung <sup>47</sup>

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<sup>44</sup>Ibid., p28.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., p69.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., pp69-70.

<sup>47</sup>Hannelore Hilzheimer, 'Jutta Schlott: "Früh und Spät"; Der Kinderbuchverlag Berlin 1982', in *Beiträge...* 69 (1983), pp70-73, (p72).



and concluded:

Dieses gute Buch sollten Kinder und Eltern lesen. Und nicht nur lesen. Darüber reden muß man.<sup>48</sup>

Schlott's work succeeded in provoking a great deal of discussion among children's book specialists. Hannes Hüttner, at the Theoretical Conference in Neubrandenburg in 1986, used the book as a basis for discussing the contradiction between society's demand for dedication to work and the neglect which this can cause:

Solange die Gesellschaft den Widerspruch noch nicht dadurch beseitigen kann, daß sie Kindererziehung als Berufstätigkeit anerkennt und bezahlt, wird es in jeder Familie individuelle Lösungen geben müssen, Kompromisse in jedem Fall, die sehr verschiedene Ausgänge haben können. Doch ist schon Benennung verdienstvoll.<sup>49</sup>

Schlott too spoke about her own views on the issue at the Theoretical Conference in Neubrandenburg in 1986. Unlike the majority of children's authors, she appeared to direct her criticism less at attitudes than at the organisation of the workforce:

Lassen Sie mich vergrößern: Die Struktur des Arbeitsalltags hat sich seit der Herausbildung der industriellen Produktion kaum verändert. Die Frauen wurden eingeordnet. Die Kinder aus ihm eliminiert.<sup>50</sup>

She also voiced an unusual solution suggested by a young mother who was about to return to work after her 'Babyjahr':

Kurz bevor ich nach Neubrandenburg fuhr, sagte eine junge Frau, deren Baby-Jahr demnächst zuende geht, zu mir: Weißt du, was ich mir vom Parteitag wünsche - daß er die Krippen verbietet!<sup>51</sup>

Such opinions would perhaps prove incomprehensible to those in the West who saw the GDR's employment legislation in idealised terms, but

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<sup>48</sup>Ibid., p73.

<sup>49</sup>Hannes Hüttner, 'Arbeit und Familie in der Kinder- und Jugendliteratur : Vortrag zur Theoretischen Konferenz des Schriftstellerverbandes der DDR anläßlich der 24. Tage der Kinder- und Jugendliteratur der DDR', in *Kinderliteratur-Report* 1/1986, pp7-16, (p11).

<sup>50</sup>Jutta Schlott, 'Diskussionsbeitrag zur Theoretischen Konferenz des Schriftstellerverbandes der DDR zu den 24. Tagen der Kinder- und Jugendliteratur / Neubrandenburg 1986', p1, DDR-Zentrum für Kinderliteratur archive.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid.

demonstrate the intensity of the dilemma faced by working women.

During the 1970s and 1980s, by focussing attention on the negative social impact of near-full employment, authors expressed a challenging view of the role of work in GDR society. While authors continually emphasised work's detrimental effects on family life, the nature of the portrayals suggests that the aim was to provoke thought and discussion about the problem rather than putting forward concrete alternatives. Thus, for example, while the mother's job was often shown as problematic for the family, there were very few portrayals of housewives, and those that did exist were shown in a very negative light - the scheming social climber of Wolf Spillner's *Wasseramsel* (1984), for example, or the oppressed domestic slave shown in the surgeon's family in Gunter Preuß' *Julia*. In both the above cases they belonged to the well-off social circle which was a common target for the criticism of GDR children's authors.

Many authors avoided direct criticism of the employment system in the GDR by attributing the blame for family problems to the individual's inability to organise leisure time or by imposing contrived happy endings, often consisting of the mother characters compromising their career ambitions. Some direct criticism can be found, although very much in the background. In Gunter Preuß' *Julia*, for example, secondary subjects within the story include school outings to two production centres where pupils discuss alcoholism at work and the necessity for 'boring' jobs. There is also some criticism of the organisation of the partnerships between schools and factories when pupils are shown to complain that they learn nothing about how the factory functions or the problems involved in its management but are seen rather as an extra labour force to sweep the floors. However, given the many themes with which Preuß attempts to deal in this book, each of these areas is merely mentioned briefly.

It seems likely that criticism within the children's books was often moderated in view of the strength of the ideal of work, constantly reinforced in young people's minds through the education system and the youth movements. Providing the future workforce with too unfavourable an image would doubtless not have been tolerated by those finally responsible for the decision whether or not to publish.

Despite the moderating of criticism in various ways, the

achievements of authors in this area should not be underestimated. The constantly recurring figure of the working mother, struggling to manage household and career, exposes flaws in concept of work as an equalising experience and challenges the traditional communist ideal of work as a liberating force. Engels had written in 1884 :

Die Befreiung der Familie wird erst möglich, sobald diese auf großem, gesellschaftlichem Maßstab an der Produktion sich beteiligen kann und die häusliche Arbeit sie nur noch in unbedeutendem Maße in Anspruch nimmt.<sup>52</sup>

A century later, the proliferation of images in children's literature, highlighting the difficulties faced by the family because of the expectations placed on working mothers, undermined such views. It was increasingly rare to come across the portrayal in literature of liberation through work.

During the final years of the GDR, work was, on the whole, no longer portrayed as a positive force which developed the personality. Stories portraying socialisation in the children's literature of the Honecker years tended to concentrate on different areas of experience. The connection depicted between work and socialisation was largely a negative one - the young were shown to find their place in society in spite of the effects of their parents' work.

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<sup>52</sup>Engels, *Ausgewählte Werke* Bd IV, (Berlin, 1964), p179.

# THE SOCIALISATION PROCESS

## 3. INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIETY

The notion of socialisation is varyingly interpreted by different cultures. In the GDR the concept was generally understood as the process of the second birth, whereby the individual was born into society. This appears to imply that society is a relatively rigid establishment with little room for individuality. The individual must, at least outwardly, learn to conform or must face exclusion.

Although the Youth Law stated that the young were to some extent responsible for their own development, it specified that the end result of this progress would be the creation of socialist personalities. Moreover, the process of the second birth was in fact firmly directed through initiatives taken by schools and various social institutions of the Establishment, for example the Young Pioneers, the FDJ and sports organisations. Since the role of the family in the process of socialisation was also acknowledged as significant, attempts were made to direct this: numerous family advice books suggested how the development of individuals should unfold in order to achieve society's aims.

Gerhart Neuner in his work *Die zweite Geburt : Über Erziehung im Alltag* (1978) deals extensively with the notion of socialisation. As was indicated in the previous chapter, he stresses the role which work plays in the integration of the adult individual into society. In the section entitled 'Welche Erziehungshaltung paßt in unsere Gesellschaft?', which focuses specifically on varying approaches to the education of the young, he begins by considering the Marxist concept that the free development of society as a whole is dependent on the free development of each individual, and implies that, under socialism, the latter is paramount:

Zunächst sei daran erinnert, daß der Sinn des Sozialismus die Schaffung von Bedingungen für die *freie, allseitige Entwicklung der Persönlichkeit* ist.<sup>1</sup>

However, further statements demonstrate his belief that the direction in which the personality should develop must be clearly defined

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<sup>1</sup>Gerhart Neuner, *Die zweite Geburt : Über Erziehung im Alltag* (Leipzig, Jena, Berlin, 1978), p38.

by society:

Erziehen heißt auf eine Persönlichkeit einwirken.<sup>2</sup>

In der sozialistischen Gesellschaft, so haben wir verdeutlicht, gibt es keine grundlegenden Widersprüche zwischen dem, was für den einzelnen gut ist, und dem, was der Gesellschaft nützt.<sup>3</sup>

This approach to education, whereby it was claimed that the accentuation of the individual viewpoint was detrimental to the collective and therefore to the individual concerned, appears to be anathema to individuality. Other family advice books are equally uncompromising on this point. The tenor of Roland Rudolf's *Mit Beispiel und Liebe : Ratschläge für die Erziehung in der Familie* (1981), for example, is revealed by the cover illustration, an image of a child being moulded out of clay by an adult. The author even provides a list of goals to be attained through family education:

Achtung vor dem Menschen, vor dem Leben, vor der Arbeit, Erfüllung von Pflichten, Wahrheitsliebe, Bescheidenheit, gegenseitige Achtung, staatsbürgerliche Verantwortung. Die Herausbildung solcher Eigenschaften, die Kommunisten eigen sind, zählt auch zu den Zielen der Erziehung im Elternhaus.<sup>4</sup>

Very early GDR children's literature reflected the authoritarianism implicit in such attitudes. Individuality was to be discouraged. The views of the Soviet author and educational specialist Anton S. Makarenko, whose theory of collective education very much guided the GDR system, were particularly influential during the formative years. His article 'Über Kinderliteratur', published in an early edition of the *Beiträge...*, stresses his insistence on general rather than individual characterisation in literature:

Diese Helden müssen positive oder negative, jedoch unbedingt nuancierte Gefühle wecken, die einen Hochachtung, die andern Verehrung, die dritten Gefallen, die vierten ein frohes Lächeln, die fünften Besorgtheit und Zärtlichkeit usw. Doch alle diese charakteristischen Gefühlsregungen dürfen nur typisch, niemals aber ausschließlich individuell sein. Nur ein sehr geschulter Leser ist imstande, die seltenen individuellen Eigenarten zu genießen, die das Bild der Persönlichkeit komplizieren und einmalig machen.

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p40.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p41.

<sup>4</sup>Roland Rudolf, *Mit Beispiel und Liebe : Ratschläge für die Erziehung in der Familie* (Leipzig, 1981), p22.



Kinder sind zu einem solchen ästhetischen Genuß noch nicht fähig. <sup>5</sup>

He believed that children's literature had to provide unambiguous characters and positive heroes whom the readers would wish to emulate. Early works of GDR children's fiction followed these lines and, in doing so, provided young readers with many bland and highly didactic works, showing the smooth integration of the central characters into society.

During the 1960s, when the approach to children's literature had become less openly didactic, the aim of producing in children's fiction exemplary though less blatant images of socialism remained. Günter Ebert wrote in 1969:

Kunst ist ein totales Kommunikationsmittel. Und insofern produziert sie auf unmerkliche Art und Weise gesellschaftliches Bewußtsein. Nicht so, daß irgendeine Figur an irgendeiner Stelle behauptet: Der Sozialismus ist gut, sondern indem sie aus völliger Selbstverständlichkeit heraus - zum Beispiel - das Verhältnis eines bemerkenswerten Menschen zu seiner ganz normalen, aber als sozialistisch bekannten Umgebung zeigt.<sup>6</sup>

In the 1970s, however, with moves to remove taboos in literature and a generally more critical approach from children's book authors, a different view of socialisation began to make itself felt. Children's book authors became increasingly vociferous in their criticism of the curbing of individuality, especially where this occurred through restrictive educational practices. This issue was often the focus of debate at the annual Theoretical Conferences. In his introductory paper at the 20th Children's Book Week in Halle in 1982, Hans-Dieter Schmidt, professor of psychology at the Humboldt-Universität, Berlin, spoke out very strongly against the form of education which constantly set academic goals, judged by achievement, and left no room for personal development or individual discovery:

Bravsein und Wohlverhalten sind Qualitäten unserer Kinder, die von zu vielen Erziehern in einem Ausmaß gewünscht, erwartet und belohnt werden, das zu keinem Erziehungsziel unserer Pädagogik

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<sup>5</sup>A. S. Makarenko, 'Über Kinderliteratur', in *Beiträge...* 3 (1963), pp6-8, (p8).

<sup>6</sup> Günter Ebert, 'Spiel und Spiegel', in *Neue Deutsche Literatur* 8/1969, pp179-187, (p184).

paßt.<sup>7</sup>

Good teachers, he asserted, made themselves dispensable by encouraging their pupils to take more responsibility for their own development and by steering them towards greater independence. Like many, he felt that children should be taught to question the necessity of the achievement principle.

The author and children's book specialist Hannes Hüttner, speaking at the 24th Children's Book Week in Neubrandenburg in 1986, echoed many of Schmidt's views on the education of the young, stating for example:

Ein Kind soll nicht schlechthin zum Regelbefolger werden, es muß Normen auch kritisch einschätzen können.<sup>8</sup>

However, he also appeared to emphasise the notion that this less restrictive approach to education did not in any way dispute the goals to be achieved:

Der Verlauf der zweiten Geburt ist nie völlig, doch weitgehend beendet, wenn das Kind das System sozialer Gebote und Aufforderungen als sein eigenes Gewissen verinnerlicht hat.<sup>9</sup>

The extent of freedom of development children should be allowed was increasingly debated during the Honecker years. For many, like Hüttner, the implicit challenge was not to society's norms, but to certain of its methods in attaining these. Lenin had expressed the belief that each generation reaches socialism by a different route from that of its predecessor.<sup>10</sup> Many began to recognise that a dynamic society could only be maintained through the cultivation of individuals, but that this required individuals who were committed to the ideals of that society. Young people who had, as Lenin stipulated, found their own way to their parents' goals would, by necessity, be more committed than those to whom the goals had been dictated. The risk was that the young, given the freedom to discover

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<sup>7</sup>Hans-Dieter Schmidt, 'Das Bild des Kindes - eine Norm und ihre Wirkungen', in *Neue Deutsche Literatur* 10/1982, pp71-81, (p79-80).

<sup>8</sup>Hannes Hüttner, 'Arbeit und Familie in der Kinder- und Jugendliteratur', in *Almanach zur Kinderliteratur der DDR : Bücher und Bilder* (Hamburg, 1989), pp21-26, (p23).

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p22.

<sup>10</sup>WI Lenin, *Werke*, Bd 23 (Berlin, 1957), p164.

socialism for themselves, would choose to follow different ideals.

During the 1970s and 1980s, many children's book authors continued to portray the child's socialisation very much in accordance with official GDR ideology. This can be seen clearly in the family stories of adopted children, who, away from the influence of their materialistic, self-centred natural parents, develop and integrate through a working-class family. Similarly in the stories about work, it is very often a working-class character who provides the necessary help to enable the isolated child to recognise its place in society.

Increasingly during this period, however, with a greater concentration in literature on subjectivity, and self-fulfilment within society, it was possible for the central characters in children's stories to retain their individuality, often to a significant degree, encouraging the readers to question in particular society's demands for conformity. The critical tenor of such stories was due in part to the emergence of a younger generation of authors. Unlike their predecessors, they had not experienced the War years or the idealism surrounding the foundation of the GDR state and thus did not feel the same degree of obligation towards its ideology. Consequently, perhaps, they felt more at liberty to criticise the society which had developed out of this ideology over the years.

In many cases the portrayal of the confrontation between individual and society involved the questioning of society's attitudes and values. Authors often aimed to activate their readers to criticise their surroundings, perhaps even, as Karin Richter suggests, to attempt to change them:

Hinter all diesen Wandlungen steht die Absicht der Autoren, bei ihren Lesern ein Engagement zu entwickeln und zur Herausbildung einer aktiven Lebenshaltung beizutragen, auf deren Grundlage erst die gewaltigen Aufgaben durch die junge Generation zu lösen sind.<sup>11</sup>

Since this was literature for children and since the greatest direct influence of society on the young was the education system, many stories involved conflict at school, individual teacher figures often being used to represent restrictive educational attitudes. Stories questioned the necessity

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<sup>11</sup>Karin Richter, 'Soziale Erkundungen in der Kinder- und Jugendliteratur', in *DDR-Literatur '87 im Gespräch* edited by Siegfried Rönisch (Berlin and Weimar, 1988), pp76-90, (p77).

of conforming to society's norms, and stressed the importance of showing tolerance towards those who differed from these. There was a particular increase in the portrayal of the handicapped, whose existence had hitherto been ignored or even denied, and of outsiders at odds with society, considered until this point to be a bourgeois motif. While the socialisation of such characters naturally involved some degree of compromise, this was not always made solely on the part of the individual.

The discussion below concentrates mainly on the works of two authors whose children's books are particularly representative of the portrayals of socialisation during this period. Both Martin Meißner's depictions of the handicapped and Gunter Preuß' of individuals outside society question society's attitudes towards those who are perceived to differ from the norm and promote the acceptance of individuality.

### Children with disabilities

In drawing the attention of young readers to the socialisation process and to the relationship between individual and society, children's authors inevitably focussed above all on the influence of the education system, which presented the greatest pressures on the young to conform to society's norms. In this context, those works which deal with children with mental disabilities were particularly significant. These central characters could not conform, particularly to the academic norms which society demanded of them, and it was thus society which was forced to change its attitudes towards individuality if socialisation was to occur. Readers were led to question social reaction to this group and to recognise the considerable contributions those who could not conform were still able to make to society.

Jutta Schlott's *Der Sonderfall* (1981), a collection of short stories dealing with children whose existence in some way differs from the 'norm', was amongst the first to portray children with mental disabilities. In the title story, which tells of Siegfried, a boy with a mental handicap, criticism is made of uncompromising attitudes within the education system towards those children who failed to meet academic standards. The figure of one particular teacher is used to represent this approach:



“Aber der Junge braucht doch auch sein Zuhause, er findet sich allein nicht zurecht”, versuchte die Mutter einzuwenden.  
“Der Junge ist schwachsinnig!” entgegnete die Lehrerin laut. “Mit dem Gedanken müssen Sie sich endlich vertraut machen. Und er muß in eine Sonderschule.”<sup>12</sup>

The shortcomings of this particular teacher are compensated for by others, above all the headmaster who, after Siegfried's third unsuccessful attempt to pass year one, allows the boy to progress through school with his classmates, despite his inability to achieve the levels required in order to do this. The story makes clear that academic ability must not be the overriding attribute by which individuals are assessed. Schlott gives her story the subtitle 'Eine Geschichte mit gutem Ende'. The parents' decision to defy attempts to send the boy away to a special school is vindicated, since Siegfried is shown to become accepted as a natural part of their small rural community:

Er gehörte zu Zarrien wie die Kirche in der Dorfmitte, wie die Apfelbäume in den Obstgärten.<sup>13</sup>

Towards the end of the story, when Siegfried has reached school leaving age, the author focuses on the abilities and qualities which have led to his acceptance: he has, for example, a great affinity with children, a skill with animals, and a very friendly nature. In fact there is often a tendency on the part of the authors to over-compensate for disabilities by endowing the handicapped with extraordinary skills, thus detracting from the message that these individuals should be accepted as they are.

The author perhaps most closely associated with the portrayal of children who differed in some way from the perceived norm, and one whose works particularly disclose a tendency to over-compensate for the disabilities portrayed in his central characters, was Martin Meißner. Central to his writing was the question of the treatment of these children by society at large. In an interview with Meißner, Claudia Rouvel defined his predominant motif as the portrayal of

Sonderfälle als fiktiv zugespitzte Beispiele für Umgangsformen in unserer Gesellschaft.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>Jutta Schlott, *Der Sonderfall : Eine Geschichte mit gutem Ende* (Berlin,1981), p88.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, p127.

<sup>14</sup>Claudia Rouvel, 'Als Schreiber müssen wir selbst das Stumme formulieren... : Gespräch mit Martin Meißner', *Beiträge...* 93 (1989), pp9-23, (p10).



Meißner's works, such as *Flammenvogel* (1984) and *Die Flöte mit dem Wunderton* (1987), present the issue in various ways for readers of different ages and draw on his own experience in special education as a speech therapist. The characters in his books are not severely handicapped: the majority have learning difficulties of some kind and are based on what Meißner somewhat disparagingly refers to as the 'Bummelletzten'. Perhaps in order to make them more accessible to the young reader, the characters, although deficient in certain areas, are aware enough to know that they are 'different' and to recognise their problems in finding a place in society.

*Flammenvogel*, for older children (the publisher's recommendation is for the over 12 age group) was the first, and perhaps only, work to focus on pupils who attended a 'Hilfsschule', a school for children with learning difficulties. The story tells of a 13-year-old boy called Henrik, his experiences at the special school, and his relationship with the world outside through performances as the drummer with the school band, through his family, through friendships and through his observations of nature.

The latter in particular provide a hopeful ending to the story and indicate Meißner's optimistic approach to his subject matter ("Es sind ja Modelle, die ich vorstelle, ein wenig utopische Provinzen." <sup>15</sup>). Through the boy's empathy with a red kite, the bird which gives rise to the book's title, the author conveys the idea that Henrik's situation is a natural one. The huge bird, which he observes in the woods, appears magnificent and proud of its own strength, but concedes immediately when attacked by a smaller crow. As a result of his own insecurities, Henrik associates himself directly with the bird:

Wenn die Menschen mit Tieren verwandt sind, dachte Henrik, könnte dieser Vogel mein Bruder sein. <sup>16</sup>

At the end of the story, however, it is revealed that the kite has built a nest, mated and produced young, which it now defends against the crows.

Henrik war sicher, Zeuge ihres ersten Fluges zu sein. Ihr habt euch Zeit gelassen, dachte er. Ihr seid wie euer Vater. Ihr hattet seine Geduld. Ihr konntet warten. Ihr habt euch erst vom Nest erhoben,

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<sup>15</sup>Beiträge... 93 (1989), p20.

<sup>16</sup>Martin Meißner, *Flammenvogel* (Berlin, 1984), p31.

als ihr die Kraft verspürtet, wie eure Eltern zu fliegen.<sup>17</sup>

The reader is thus given hope for Henrik's future, the suggestion being that, given time and patience, he too will gain the self-confidence to succeed in his own right.

Within the story, the author demonstrates a wide variety of ways in which society reacts to children like Henrik, from those who ridicule to those who are over-sympathetic. Parents are shown to be particularly at fault: one scene depicts the fear of a woman whose husband has threatened to kill his son and then his wife if the boy is selected for the special school. Meißner's aim was to question social attitudes towards those members of society who cannot succeed without extensive help. He stated of his writing:

Das ist eine offene Aufforderung an die Gesellschaft, es ist natürlich auch die Stärke meiner Figuren, daß sie die Gesellschaft fordern. Sie kommen mit ihren Eigenschaften nicht durch. Sie brauchen andere, die ihnen helfen. Es ist die Frage, schafft die Gesellschaft, sie durchzuziehen, oder schafft sie es nicht.<sup>18</sup>

Meißner intended his story to emphasise the necessity for special schools and to draw attention to the work which they carried out. As the first author to write extensively about these institutions, he was endeavouring to fill gaps in public awareness. He was criticised by Claudia Rouvel for attempting to include too many case histories in the story:

Teilweise liest es sich wie ein Report über Hilfsschülerschicksale.<sup>19</sup>

The secondary characters portrayed in the book are numerous and seem to represent varying degrees of ability, showing in each case how society reacts to these. Meißner contrasts the behaviour of former pupils in their everyday lives with the sense of belonging and achievement they feel when marching with the school band. In doing so, the author stresses not only the need to help those who cannot succeed alone, but also the detrimental effect social reactions can have on these individuals:

Ein Mädchen war immer dabei. Henrik kannte sie. Sie räumte in einem Ausflugslokal die leeren Gläser und schmutzigen Teller von

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<sup>17</sup> Martin Meißner, *Flammenvogel* (Berlin, 1984), p115.

<sup>18</sup> *Beiträge...* 93 (1989), p17.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p15.

den Gartentischen. Das tat sie mit zaghaften Bewegungen. Niemals sah sie einen der Gäste an. Sie sprach kein einziges Wort. In der Kapelle jetzt war sie wie verwandelt. Sie trat mit kräftigen Schritten auf das Pflaster und lachte den Leuten am Straßenrand zu. <sup>20</sup>

The benefits of special education are constantly stressed. However, while pupils and former pupils of the 'Hilfsschule' are shown to have severe academic disabilities, the majority tend to have special abilities or qualities in other areas. Maik, for example, who appears very quiet and subdued at school, is shown to be a very confident and competent tractor driver at home on the farm. Martin, whose status as an ex-'Hilfsschüler' is constantly exploited by his workmates on the building site, is much admired locally as lead singer of a group. By concentrating on the pupils' abilities, Meißner aims to highlight these rather than their deficiencies and to emphasise the similarities between these characters and the average reader, countering the prejudice many readers would feel against characters such as Henrik:

Ob Literatur das nun darf oder nicht, ich wollte hier ein bißchen eine Mission erfüllen. Ich will zeigen: Guckt her, prima Kerl. <sup>21</sup>

However, in over-compensating for his characters' disabilities, he risks losing the impact of his message that these children should be accepted by society in their own right.

This is particularly true of Meißner's portrayal of the character of Henrik. He is the worst pupil at writing and very bad at maths, but he can play any instrument, has an encyclopaedic knowledge of nature, and extraordinary technical skills. These and the contrast the author provides with characters such as 'Der Rufer von Besenau', an ex-pupil of the school who appears to live in a world of his own, perhaps make Henrik appear too 'normal'.

The author admitted in the interview with Claudia Rouvel that, although the book had been welcomed by staff and pupils of special schools, the figure of Henrik had drawn some criticism from these groups since it was felt that the author had made him too clever. Meißner aimed, in this work, to draw attention to the existence of special schools and to the difficulties encountered by their pupils. In order to convey to readers the

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<sup>20</sup> *Flammenvogel*, p70.

<sup>21</sup> *Beiträge...* 93 (1989), p15.

impact of social reactions on these specific individuals, Meißner was forced to show Henrik to be conscious of his abilities and limitations. He is depicted as constantly aware that the teachers are perhaps too lenient, the school too protective, and that he and his fellow-pupils will experience difficulties when they leave to enter society. The author claimed that if ignorance and prejudice had not existed, he would not have had to make the character quite so intelligent and aware, and admitted his frustration at the fact that, despite these concessions, his strongest supporters appeared to be those who were already familiar with the problems depicted. His readings of the book had been far more successful in 'Hilfsschulen' than in the normal secondary schools. In her interview with Meißner, Rouvel pointed out that young readers could not be blamed for their ignorance of the 'Hilfsschüler', since these pupils (as is indicated in Schlott's *Der Sonderfall*) were often taken out of 'normal' classes after year two. She used the discussion to draw attention to the inflexibility of the GDR's education system. Meißner's story in fact focuses on the need for special education and on its contribution to the socialisation of specific individuals. His criticism is directed instead at the pressures placed on individuals to conform to specific social norms and *Flammenvogel* highlights the fact that the difficulties of those who differ from these norms stem, for the most part, from an unenlightened society.

In *Die Flöte mit dem Wunderton*, for young readers, Meißner was himself more critical of inflexible approaches to education in the GDR. Somewhat confusingly, the story has a 5-year-old protagonist, is written for the over-10s, but was published in the large format Buchfink series, more usually reserved for younger readers. The central figure, Sebastian, is an anxious child, lacking in self-confidence, and described on the back cover of the book in the following terms:

Sebastian ist klein, rundlich, wasserscheu und ziemlich ängstlich. Wenn's unangenehm wird, verdrückt er sich gern und wartet ab, bis alles vorüber ist.

Appropriately for Sebastian's age, the society with which he is confronted is represented above all by the kindergarten, and it is therefore to the role of this that Meißner guides the reader's attention. Whereas Henrik was shown to profit from special education, Sebastian is too young to have been selected for this and must conform to the norms imposed on all children of his age. The boy lacks self-assurance, and, having recently moved to the small town is insecure, which magnifies the problems he

encounters when he first attends kindergarten.

To the non-GDR reader, the organisation of the kindergarten day itself appears draconian, with strict time plans and compulsory cold showers. This, however, is not the target of Meißner's criticism. The kindergarten regime is portrayed throughout as a norm to which Sebastian must and should learn to conform. Sebastian's reluctance to participate in the showers, for example, is shown simply as a consequence of his anxious nature, and his eventual willingness to have a lukewarm shower is equated with significant personal progress. The criticism within the story is directed instead at prevalent attitudes towards the education of the young and at the reactions of those in authority to children who do not immediately comply with desired patterns of behaviour. Meißner stated that he hoped, through his works, to influence the attitudes both of those adults who were in charge of child education, and of the children who would, in the future, take their place:

Meine Literatur möchte, daß - wenn die Kindergärtnerin z.B. *Die Flöte mit dem Wunderton* liest, und sie denkt nur mal drüber nach, dann hab ich schon ganz schön was erreicht, wenn sie den 'Bummelletzten' auch leben läßt. Mehr traue ich mir nicht zu. Oder - da ich für Kinder schreibe - wenn eine zukünftige Kindergärtnerin in fünfzehn Jahren dieses Gefühl für den 'Bummelletzten' nicht mehr los wird, das wäre schön. Paragraphen und Erziehungspläne schließen Warmherzigkeit nicht aus. Ich bin dafür, daß die Menschen das Beste aus allen Strukturen machen.<sup>22</sup>

The author voices his criticism through the apposition of the two adult figures who dominate Sebastian's experience of kindergarten: his kindergarten teacher, Fräulein Lauschert, and the school's elderly cook, Hilda. The teacher lacks the patience to deal with children like Sebastian, and while the other children take their cold showers or are sent outside to play, Sebastian seeks refuge in the kitchen. Throughout the story Hilda is presented as a sympathetic and tolerant character, opposed to the practice of basing education on achievement alone and to the way in which this leads teachers to concentrate more on children's shortcomings than on their abilities. She is constantly used to negate the orthodox views of Fräulein Lauschert:

"Ich habe auf der Kindergartenschule gelernt, daß man die Kinder nur fördert, wenn man sie fordert, wenn sie rechtzeitig begreifen, daß man sich im Leben auch anstrengen muß. Ich glaube, Sebastian

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<sup>22</sup>Ibid., pp18-19.



kommt so gern in die Küche, weil hier von ihm nichts verlangt wird, was er noch nicht so gut kann.”

“Man darf nicht vergessen, daß jedes Kind anders ist”, entgegnete Hilda.<sup>23</sup>

The reader’s sympathies inevitably lie with the more patient Hilda. The validity of her approach is particularly stressed through the linking of Sebastian’s situation, throughout the story, to the tale of the third miller’s son and his attempt to carve a magic flute from the wood of the unknown tree. In the version of the story told to the class by Fräulein Lauschert, he has not learnt his craft well enough, and his brothers lose patience with him and leave him behind. This is indicative of her approach to education. Hilda and another elderly villager offer her an alternative ending to the tale:

“Ich für mein Teil glaube, die beiden Brüder im Berg hatten mehr Geduld, als geschrieben steht. Und vor allem besaßen sie Vertrauen. So konnte der dritte Bruder in Ruhe sein Werk zu Ende führen. Vielleicht verstand er die Kunst überhaupt nicht und hatte bis dahin nicht eine einzige Flöte fertiggebracht. Aber das Vertrauen der Brüder verlieh ihm die Kraft und die Geschicklichkeit dazu.”<sup>24</sup>

Rouvel was critical of Meißner’s apparent lack of faith in his readers’ ability to make the connection between the two characters. Rather than allowing them to do so, the author shows how Sebastian, encouraged by the trust placed in him by his mother, manages to make his own flute and put it to good use in diverting a dog which was about to attack the hedgehogs in the kindergarten grounds. Given that Sebastian is only five years old, the making of the flute strains credibility.

As in *Flammenvogel*, and indeed the majority of works of this kind, the author over-compensates for his central character’s inabilities by endowing him with extraordinary skills. In attempting to demonstrate that individuals should be judged by what they can rather than by what they cannot do, authors created ‘different’ individuals who rarely differ significantly from the majority of the readers. Few stories tackle serious or severe handicap. The nature of portrayals such as Meißner’s, therefore, tended to undermine the intended plea for tolerance.

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<sup>23</sup>Martin Meißner, *Die Flöte mit dem Wunderton* (Berlin, 1987), p53.

<sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*, p62.

## Outsiders and individuality

Children's books about those with disabilities were aimed particularly at enlightening readers with no experience of this, encouraging them to review preconceived ideas. Those children's authors who chose to focus on individuals who temporarily found themselves isolated from society and reluctant to conform arose from a slightly different motivation. Through these characters, the readers were led to question not only prevailing attitudes but accepted norms within society. The fantasy story, as shall be shown in the following chapter, was particularly appropriate for creating stories of this kind. These works urged the readers to emulate their protagonists, questioning society and its conventions in order, perhaps, to achieve socialisation on their own terms.

The notion of accentuating individuality was at odds with the established order. It was constantly implied by those in authority and through the GDR's ideology that society was a norm to which individuals must conform. At the VI Philosophy Congress of the GDR in 1984, for example, Erich Hahn, presenting the main paper, stated:

Jede verabsolutierende Entgegensetzung von Vergesellschaftung und Individualitätsentwicklung, die von einer stärkeren 'Akzentuierung des Individuums' gegenüber dem Kollektiv oder der Gesellschaft ausgeht, bedeutet in ihrer Konsequenz eine Beeinträchtigung und Verarmung menschlicher Individualität. Sie trennt die Entwicklung des einzelnen von seinem gesellschaftlichen Vermögen, sich zum gesellschaftlichen Ganzen gemeinschaftlich in eine tätige und schöpferische, seine Individualität bereichernde Beziehung zu setzen.<sup>25</sup>

This belief was reflected in certain more conventional children's books of this period. Hans-Ulrich Lüdemann's *Ich - dann eine Weile nichts* (1976), for example, was, despite its title, written very much in this vein. The story, for the over-10s, is related in the first person by Bärbel, who, in the process of the tale, learns to modify her self-centred view of the world. She claims at the outset that she has no friends at school:

Mein Prinzip ist nämlich: ICH, groß geschrieben, dann eine Weile gar nichts. Noch etwas weiter weg die anderen.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup>Quoted in Dietrich Schuckmann, 'Lust und Mut zum Selbst- und Anders-Sein', in *Schauplatz : Aufsätze zur Kinder- und Jugendliteratur und zu anderen Medienkünsten* (Berlin, 1986), pp37-44, (p37).

<sup>26</sup>Hans-Ulrich Lüdemann, *Ich - dann eine Weile nichts* (Berlin, 1976), p30.

At the end of the narrative, after an encounter with the police, Bärbel is a reformed character:

Mir wird plötzlich schlecht. Das ist aber nicht nur die Aufregung. Ich ekel mich vor Bärbel Fielow. Das habe ich noch nie gespürt. Ein furchtbares Gefühl. Nicht einmal soviel wert zu sein wie die Bretter hier. Die benutzen die Maurer für ihre Arbeit. Also sind sie nützlich. Ich dagegen? <sup>27</sup>

As is illustrated here, Bärbel is shown to recognise that her egocentricity was wrong and to appreciate that true worth lies in contributing to society. The tone is very didactic, and the portrayal of Bärbel constantly focuses on her recognition of the error of her ways and her appreciation of conventional values:

Das verspreche ich: Ich werde die Zeit künftig besser nutzen. Und nicht nur, bis ich mit der Schule fertig bin. Auch darüber hinaus. So wie der Genosse es tut. <sup>28</sup>

Bärbel, the compliant individual, is thus brought very smoothly to conformity. The approach is reminiscent of the children's literature produced in the 1950s and 1960s, and was combated by other authors who, in contrast, showed central characters who struggled to maintain their uniqueness and to convert others to their cause.

Gunter Preuß is an author who particularly concentrates on portraying the socialisation process. His works reflect his belief that children should be encouraged to question expectations of conformity and allowed more responsibility for their own development. As he stated:

Es ist eine Welt der Erwachsenen mit einer Vielzahl von Gesetzen und Lebensregelungen, in die sich Kinder nur schwer und oft in ihrer Persönlichkeit gestört oder gar gebrochen einfügen können. Natürlich müssen die Eltern ihren Kindern eine Welt anbieten; aber je 'fertiger' wir sie ihnen vorsetzen, um so weniger Interesse werden sie an ihr finden. <sup>29</sup>

Examination of the various texts written by Gunter Preuß for differing age groups reveal three typical categories in his portrayal of the

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<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p285.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., p300.

<sup>29</sup>Gunter Preuß, 'Diskussionsbeitrag zur Theoretischen Konferenz an den 24. Tagen der Kinder- und Jugendliteratur/Neubrandenburg', archive material in DDR-Zentrum für Kinderliteratur, Berlin, p2.

socialisation of the young: a criticism of restrictive educational practices, an encouragement to question the society around them, and the idea that the generation of their parents has somehow lost its sense of direction or purpose. His young protagonists are restless, refuse to conform, insistent on their own individuality, and are invariably shown to influence others to their way of thinking.

The criticism of educational practices was common in the children's literature of this period. Since the young experienced society and its demands above all through the education system, it is most often this that is chosen to represent the challenge to their individuality. Certain educational reforms were introduced after the SED's 10th Party Congress at which Honecker had stressed the importance of providing each individual with the necessary encouragement to find a place for themselves in life and to make use of their abilities to benefit both society and themselves. By the late 1970s, it was claimed that an education system based on partnership had begun to emerge. An article entitled 'Von Kindern lernen', published in *Sonntag* in 1979 claimed:

Unbedingter Gehorsam und kalte Autorität sind nicht mehr die Pole des Verhältnisses von Kindern und Älteren. Wie in anderen Beziehungen auch, wächst hier immer mehr eine Partnerschaft, in die jeder seines einbringt, in der nicht einer der einseitig Nehmende ist, sondern jeder ein Gebender. Erziehung ist kein bloßes Weitergeben von Gelerntem, es ist auch ein gemeinsames Lernen. <sup>30</sup>

However, the numerous criticisms of the education system to be found in the children's literature of this period and the debate which they engendered among children's book specialists on teaching methods suggest that the partnership between teacher and pupil was not quite so prevalent as the article alleged.

Unsympathetic teacher characters are manifold in the children's literature of the Honecker era. Christa Kožik's teachers, for example, are intolerant - one teacher in *Der Engel mit dem goldenen Schnurrbart* ridicules a boy in front of the class because he attends religious lessons after school - and they deny individuality - Moritz' paintings, showing a sun with ears and birds with top hats, are dismissed by his teacher because they are not realistic. Meißner uses the figure of the kindergarten teacher

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<sup>30</sup>Regina Scheer, 'Von Kindern lernen : 1979 Jahr des Kindes', in *Sonntag* 1/1979 (7 January, 1979), p3.

in *Die Flöte mit dem Wunderton* to convey his plea for greater tolerance and the acceptance that each child develops at a different pace. Given that the teacher represents one of the major authority figures in a child's life, it is natural that authors should portray some of them as unpopular characters, but the number to be found in GDR children's literature leads to the conclusion that the figures represented something more - the education system and perhaps authority in general.

In Preuß' works, the school system is often represented through two very different teacher figures with contrasting approaches to education. His two works *Julia* (1976) and *Feen sterben nicht* (1985) mirror each other very closely in this respect. Both written for the upper range of the children's book age group - *Julia* for the over-12s and *Feen sterben nicht* for the over-13s - they each tell of a teenage girl, once popular with her class and academically bright, who faces some sort of personal crisis which causes her to isolate herself from those around her. Each is neglected by a conventional teacher, but helped by a less orthodox one.

In *Julia*, the author shows how the pupils of Julia's class benefit from a change of form teacher. Herr Rohnke, who has taught the class for many years, has been an inspiring teacher. The class is academically very successful and Julia compares him to a traffic light, directing the class precisely in the direction he wants them to go. Fräulein Rosen's approach is initially confusing to a class used to strong leadership, as Julia's deliberations on her new form teacher make clear:

Sie stellte sich Fräulein Rosen als lebendige Ampel vor und die Jungen und Mädchen der 8b als Autos, die zu beiden Seiten der Kreuzung standen. Sie ließ die Ampel rotes und grünes Licht geben, völlig durcheinander. Die Autos rasten los, näherten sich der Kreuzungsmitte, kamen einander immer näher ... Gleich mußten sie zusammenstoßen ...! <sup>31</sup>

However, Preuß demonstrates how Fräulein Rosen's methods encourage the class to take on some responsibility for themselves. She does not present them with certainties but prompts them with questions. The restlessness unleashed in the class, and in particular in Julia, eventually proves productive, leading them to become a strong and responsible collective with a place for all, including those neglected by the previous teacher.

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<sup>31</sup>Gunter Preuß, *Julia* (Berlin, 1976), p68.



This is not simply a story of smooth integration. The pupils initially become insecure and apathetic, and the methods used by the new teacher are generally disapproved of by other teachers at the school. In the course of the story, however, they too come to see the success of the new approach. Preuß demonstrates how the methods of the former teacher had allowed others to take advantage of the class' willingness to be led. Liebscher, Herr Rohnke's favourite pupil, is shown to have dominated the class with his own version of the philosophy of leadership:

“Die meisten sind doch Nullen, Puppen. Wenn man die nicht aufzieht, laufen die doch nicht.” <sup>32</sup>

“Auf die Masse ist doch kein Verlaß.” <sup>33</sup>

When Fräulein Rosen encourages the class to think for themselves and take responsibility for their actions, Liebscher gradually loses his influence. Preuß advocates the implementation of methods which will ensure independent thought and possibly achieve greater commitment among the young.

In Preuß' *Feen sterben nicht*, opinions on the central character's struggle to find her own identity and place in society are similarly polarised between two contrasting teachers. The conventional approach is represented by Luise's form teacher Herr Bredel. He offers Luise a world which is comfortable but which will allow her little independence:

“Sieh mal, Luise, das Leben braucht Ziele. Um diese zu erreichen, braucht man Richtlinien. Wegweiser, verstehst du. ... Jemand, der Bescheid weiß. Der Kraft hat. Und Mut. Jemand, auf den immer Verlaß ist, der immer Rat weiß...”

“Sie selbst haben mich gelehrt, es gibt keinen Gott” habe ich gesagt. In mir ist alles auf Abwehr ausgewesen. Herr Brendel hat mir meine alte Welt mit den guten Göttern angeboten. Diese Welt, in der alles schön und gut ist. ... Aber ich hätte mich dafür hergeben müssen. ... Mein Verstand hätte nicht mir selbst gehört. <sup>34</sup>

Preuß demonstrates how the reasoning of such teachers serves only to isolate the young in their resentment of the conformity demanded of them. Again, however, this view is countered with the introduction of a

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<sup>32</sup>Ibid., p190.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., p219.

<sup>34</sup>Gunter Preuß, *Feen sterben nicht* (Berlin, 1985), p114.

young, female teacher who recognises Luise's problems and talks to her about life, pointing out that academic achievement is only one narrow aspect of learning:

“Lieber in Mathematik eine Fünf als im Leben” <sup>35</sup>

Again Preuß' story demonstrates the success of a teacher who bases her approach to education on empiricism, instilling in the pupils the importance of challenging received views and of the productive power of uncertainties. This is indicative of Preuß' own views on education. He stated at the Theoretical Conference in Neubrandenburg in 1986:

Die Schule sollte Mut machen zum Zweifel, Unruhe schaffen, den Schülern das Fragen lehren, damit aus dem Widerstreit pubertierender Gefühle und wechselhafter Ansichten ein fester Charakter sich bilden kann. <sup>36</sup>

The aspect of questioning and discovering life for oneself is central to all of Preuß' children's books. Preuß did not restrict this message to teenage readers. In *Annabella und der Große Zauberer* (1986) he presents a similar issue for the over-8s. A poem at the beginning of the book stresses, in a more lighthearted way than in Preuß' teenage books, the importance of asking questions:

Warum frag ich warum?  
Wer nicht warum fragt,  
der ist dumm.  
Warum steht an des GROSSEN ZAUBERERS Haus,  
wer nicht hineinspringt,  
der bleibt drauß. <sup>37</sup>

It is again through the education system that the child's individuality is challenged. As a naturally restless and inquisitive child, Annabella is excited at the prospect of expanding her world through learning. However, her unconventional behaviour at school, above all her constant questioning, is seen by the teachers as disruptive and challenging, and she is shown to be constantly frustrated by those in authority who attempt to insist on the importance of plans and timetables:

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<sup>35</sup>Ibid., p111.

<sup>36</sup>Gunter Preuß, 'Diskussionsbeitrag...', p5.

<sup>37</sup>Gunter Preuß, *Annabella und der Große Zauberer* (Berlin, 1986), p3.

Sie wollte tanzen, springen, fliegen, auf den Händen laufen, ihre Nase in die Luft recken, an einem Weitspuckwettbewerb teilnehmen, Berge besteigen, die Meere durchschwimmen und auf dem Mond große Sprünge machen. Vor allem wollte sie fragen, warum, ohne daß sie damit jemand zur Verzweiflung brachte. <sup>38</sup>

Her behaviour leads her to be sent to the headmistress, who asserts the view that pupils should conform to expected patterns of behaviour. There appears to be no room for individuality among the pupils:

“In der Schule hat nun mal der Lehrer das Sagen.” <sup>39</sup>

Preuß, however, depicts a situation in which Annabella’s questioning, enthusiasm and excitement prove so infectious that it is those in authority who are forced to change their approach to education. When the rest of Annabella’s class begin to question what they are taught, the teacher, after initial concern about adhering to the syllabus, introduces a ‘Warumstunde’ during which pupils can ask questions which are important to them. Preuß shows that this produces a tremendous feeling of satisfaction among the pupils:

Ihre Augen glänzten. Sie lachten froh. <sup>40</sup>

The author emphasises the sense of achievement inherent in an empiric approach to education.

Although the educational system is central to these stories, the socialisation of the young protagonists involved is not based solely around this. Through Fräulein Schulze, for example, Luise learns that it is important to apply the approach of questioning to other areas of life:

“Wer liebt, fragt nach dem anderen. Solange er liebt, hört er nicht auf damit.” <sup>41</sup>

Similarly, at the end of *Annabella und der Große Zauberer*, Preuß, through a somewhat contrived meeting and reconciliation between Annabella and her friend Tilo Rubinstein, stresses the importance of asking questions in a relationship:

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<sup>38</sup>Ibid., p49.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., p44.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., p70.

<sup>41</sup>*Feen sterben nicht*, p110.

Das Warum ging zwischen beiden hin und her. Daraus entstand eine schöne und feste Brücke, über die sie aufeinander zugen. <sup>42</sup>

Each of Preuß' heroines struggles with the world around them and is often at odds with society but insists on her individuality and right to self-determination. Luise and Julia reject comfortable worlds where their thoughts are led and their actions are dictated to them. Appropriately for the younger readers, Preuß seeks other means of conveying this message in *Annabella und der Große Zauberer*. In Annabella's case, this insistence on self-determination centres around her name and her search for the omnipotent great magician of the title. While her parents called the girl Carmen because of her mother's love of that opera, she herself demands to be known as Annabella on account of its connection with a former opera singer, Anna Miglitz, who used to look after her when she was very young. Her parents and teachers are forced to comply with her wishes. Towards the end of the story, Preuß depicts Annabella's realisation that her search for the great magician is meaningless since she herself has the power to make things happen.

In each of Preuß' stories, the central character's demands for self-determination and their rejection of conformity are linked with a strong contrast between various generations within the GDR. The young are constantly shown to find greater sympathy and understanding with the grandparent generation than with their own parents. Preuß gives the impression that the middle generation has lost its way. It is through substitute grandmother figures that Annabella achieves socialisation and Julia appears to empathise far more with the past struggles of her grandfather than with her parents' problems.

The young are shown to question their parents' standards and find them lacking in *Feen sterben nicht*. Reiner Horn, Luise's friend, speaks disparagingly of his parents' narrow vision and lack of dreams or ambitions. By contrast, the young are shown to be determined to alter this situation and not to make the same mistakes. Reiner tells Luise:

“Ich trainiere gegen den Schlaf. Ich will nicht zu den Pennern gehören, die ständig von ihren Träumen erzählen. Ich will etwas erleben.”

“Ja”, habe ich gesagt. “Ich auch. Von mir aus etwas ganz Verrücktes. Würdest du dich mit einer Rakete auf einen fremden

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<sup>42</sup>*Annabella und der Große Zauberer*, p76.

Stern schießen lassen?"

"Jederzeit. Aber es kommt ja niemand und will etwas von mir. Schule, Schule, Schule. Was danach kommt, ist nicht anders. Aber irgendwann lasse ich etwas passieren." <sup>43</sup>

The young in these stories are also shown to recognise that their parents' generation must be very insecure if the questioning of a few children can disturb them. Preuß points out through Luise that a world without questions and doubts is not necessarily as secure as it may initially seem:

Fräulein Schulze hat recht: Wenn die Erwachsenen eine Frage stellen, wollen sie ihre eigene Antwort hören. Sie wollen ihre Welt so fest und sicher wie eine Burg. Aber so fest und sicher scheint ihre Welt nicht zu sein, sonst hätten sie nicht soviel Angst, wenn jemand, der so schwach ist wie ich, einmal daran rüttelt. Denn ich muß wohl daran gerüttelt haben, sonst wären sie nicht gegen mich.<sup>44</sup>

The parent generation is clearly shown to have lost something which the younger generation is seeking to redefine. Perhaps this is one reason why *Feen sterben nicht* proved so unpopular with at least one adult critic. Konrad Müller, reviewing the book in the *Beiträge...* was scathing about the behaviour of the various characters and appeared especially irritated by Luise's inability to conform:

Nach Anlage und Handlungsführung aber ist eigentlich die Prognose wahrscheinlich ... , daß sie - wenn nicht schlimmer - zu einem der ewig nörgelnden, mit sich und der Welt verfeindeten, unerquicklichen Mitmenschen wird. <sup>45</sup>

In *Annabella und der Große Zauberer*, the author describes the process by which the parent generation loses its way. The story begins before the protagonist's birth when her young parents still have dreams - she wants to see the world, his idyll is a bungalow by the sea. These later appear to be lost in the drudgery of their everyday working lives and the dullness of their surroundings:

Die Müllers wohnen im Westen der Stadt, wo Fabriken sich aneinanderdrängen und die Schornsteine schwefelgelben Rauch in

<sup>43</sup>*Feen sterben nicht*, p75.

<sup>44</sup>*Ibid.*, p128.

<sup>45</sup>Konrad Müller, 'Gunter Preuß: "Feen sterben nicht"', Illustrationen von Christa Unzner-Fischer, Der Kinderbuchverlag Berlin 1985. "Annabella und der Große Zauberer", Illustrationen von Karl-Heinz Appelmann, Der Kinderbuchverlag Berlin 1986', in *Beiträge...* 82 (1987), pp65-69, (p67).



die Luft stoßen. Das alte Haus steht an einer Hauptstraße, auf der Tag und Nacht Straßenbahnen und Autos fahren. Entlang des Fußwegs wachsen ein paar Lindenbäume, deren Blätter nicht grün, sondern grau sind.<sup>46</sup>

They begin to worry about making money, keeping up with their neighbours, and saving for a television, which, once acquired, increases their apathy. While her parents are at work, Annabella is initially cared for by the former opera singer, who tells the girl adventurous and romantic stories of which her parents disapprove. Later, through the girl's friendship with Ilse Sebastian, another pensioner who finds time and patience for Annabella, Preuß implies that this generation too feels neglected and empathises with the young:

Sie sagte: "Da habe ich nun gedacht, von mir will keiner mehr etwas wissen. Nun bist du da mit deinem Warum."<sup>47</sup>

She also tells the girl stories, but ones with a more practical, realistic slant, which apparently allow the girl to find a place within the real world, rather than being isolated in her romantic daydreams. Through Frau Sebastian, Annabella learns dreams must be based, like her stories, in 'HEUTELAND'. She teaches Annabella that the 'Wunderland ALLES ERLAUBT' of which the girl dreams would be chaos, with simultaneous summer and winter, night and day. Through contrasting the effects of the two sets of stories on the girl, Preuß makes clear that his aim is not to advocate total individuality or total change, but to encourage a questioning of the existing order within certain rules and limitations.

In *Julia*, the parallel between the generation of the grandparents and that of their grandchildren is made particularly clear when the author links the young protagonist and her struggle for individuality with the struggles of those in the past who fought for socialism. At intervals throughout the story, Preuß introduces the character of Julia's grandfather, who emphasises the fact that the older generation had to fight for what they wanted and believed in and encourages the young to do likewise. A man with good communist credentials - a participant in the Hamburg Uprising, and in the Spanish Civil War, a mayor after 1945 - he is furious at the direction communism has taken and constantly rows with his son about this:

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<sup>46</sup>*Annabella und der Große Zauberer*, p6.

<sup>47</sup>*Ibid.*, p60.

“Ein Kommunist willst du sein, Leißner! Was tust du denn dafür, he? Wir haben unser Leben dafür riskiert, und nicht nur einmal, kann ich dir versichern, du Baby, du! Und was macht ihr? Ihr denkt, wenn ihr euer bißchen Plan erfüllt, läuft schon alles wie geschmiert, das denkt ihr doch. Der Kapitalist ist ein Wolf, und einen Wolf muß man töten! Und ihr, was macht ihr - ihr verhandelt mit ihm. Friedliche Koexistenz nennt sich das jetzt! Und komm mir nicht, daß das Lenin gesagt haben soll! Lenin war ein Kämpfer der alten Garde, nicht so ein neumodischer Verhandlungskünstler!”

Julia mochte den Großvater so grimmig und ungeduldig. <sup>48</sup>

The grandfather is shown to approve of Fräulein Rosen's educational approach. At a school meeting for parents and pupils, he is shown to recognise the ability of the young to argue about issues with which they disagree and, addressing the children, expresses the satisfaction that this gives him:

“Das, was euch erwartet, wird so ähnlich sein wie dieser Abend. Es wird ein Kampf werden um das Glück der Welt. Aber ihr steht ja schon mitten drin in diesem Kampf. Das beruhigt mich. Das macht mir alles leichter. Darum auch finde ich diesen Abend ganz in Ordnung.” <sup>49</sup>

In directly stating that, after the death of her grandfather, Julia feels that something of him lives on in her, Preuß demonstrates again the link between the old and the young and his encouragement of the young to stand up for what they believe in. Preuß is not advocating radical changes in ideology but in behaviour and attitude. The ideals he promotes are those of socialism, but he implies, as Lenin stated, that each generation must reach the goal in its own way. He stresses that this will take some time and that mistakes will be made, but also makes clear that, until the young have been allowed to achieve this, their allegiance to the State and its ideals will remain purely superficial.

Preuß invariably provides optimistic endings to his children's stories. His heroines are always successful in beginning to alter the attitudes of those around them. As a GDR author, he believed in the power of literature to bring about change by enlightening and activating its readers. His works were intended to compel the young to recognise the discrepancy between ideal and reality and to appreciate their own potential to remedy this. As Preuß stated in an interview with Michael Hinze:

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<sup>48</sup>Julia, p50.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., p216.

Schreiben sollte nur der, der das Leben nicht lassen kann. <sup>50</sup>

This was a common approach to children's literature during the Honecker years. Other authors, however, demonstrated that optimistic endings were not strictly necessary to achieve similar effects. One notable story which illustrates this is Alfred Wellm's *Karlchen Duckdich*, published in 1977 in the Buchfink series for readers of 8 years and over. In contrast to Preuß' works, the young protagonist here apparently finds no place in society and no influence to change his situation. Instead, Wellm's portrayal focuses on the protagonist as he learns to endure his outsider status. The story describes an afternoon and evening in the life of Karlchen, aged 10, and his 5-year-old sister Kristina. They find themselves at odds with society because of their recent move to the city from the small community of Groß-Vierfelde. While their parents are at work, they wander around the streets, confronted with an unfamiliar atmosphere of impersonality and unfriendliness:

Er grüßte jeden, der an ihnen vorüberging - so wie man es in Groß-Vierfelde tat. Doch es waren viele Menschen auf der Straße. Und sie waren alle sehr in Eile. Und sie hörten wohl auch nicht, daß er sie grüßte. <sup>51</sup>

They soon learn not to greet the strangers. However, it is not only the people who present a problem: even the layout of their surroundings appears incomprehensible:

Manchmal lag unerwartet eine kleine Wiese neben der Straße, und auf der Wiese stand ein Baum. Oder es standen vier Bäume. Aber man durfte die Wiese nicht betreten. Und auch die Blumenbeete durfte man nicht betreten, obwohl die Gärten keine Zäune hatten. <sup>52</sup>

While Kristina is entertained by her brother as he weaves stories around their everyday surroundings, Karlchen himself is starved of attention and totally overburdened by the situation in which he finds himself. His mother appears briefly in the evening and makes a hasty snack for them before leaving for her evening class which she will attend for the next three years. Their father does not return before the two children are asleep. After putting Kristina to bed, Karlchen is shown to

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<sup>50</sup>Michael Hinze, 'Interview mit Gunter Preuß, Alex-Wedding-Preisträger 1986', in *Beiträge...* 82 (1987), pp5-10, (p6).

<sup>51</sup>Alfred Wellm, *Karlchen Duckdich* (Berlin, 1977), p8.

<sup>52</sup>*Ibid.*, p30.

compose a letter to his grandmother in which he creates another of his illusions - the assertion that he is enjoying life in his new home:

Auch mit den Kindern habe ich mich hier schon angefreundet. Und wir spielen dann zusammen. Oder ich erzähle ihnen, wie es in Groß-Vierfelde war. ... Auch spielen wir oft Greifen mit den fremden Kindern. Was ebenfalls viel Freude macht. Oder wir spielen auch Verstecken mit den Kindern. Oder wir spielen ... <sup>53</sup>

The story ends with Karlchen and Kristina alone together, as isolated as at the beginning. There is no immediate prospect of integration. Karlchen does not have the power to change his environment and there is no sign that society recognises that there is a problem to be dealt with. Claudia Rouvel referred to the book as 'eine totale Absage an das "Kinder Glücksland DDR"' <sup>54</sup>. Wellm wanted, through this book, to make his readers aware of the dangers in a lack of communication between children and adults:

Es ist die Normalität, die wir dulden. Dagegen wollte ich ein Buch schreiben. <sup>55</sup>

In depicting everyday life in this manner, the author illustrates the failure of society to cope with or even recognise the problems of the young.

It is unclear for whom Wellm was writing. As an author who unusually came to children's literature after writing for adults (the reverse was more often the case), it could be argued that his message would have greater impact if written specifically for adults. Perhaps Wellm's book was, as Meißner had implied of his own works, written for the adults of the future.

All of the above works illustrate a tendency to highlight in children's literature unacceptable patterns of behaviour with the intention of bringing about change. Authors aimed to activate readers in a way that the stories of smooth integration of the 1950s and 1960s could not. Karin Richter wrote in her review of new children's books in 1983:

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<sup>53</sup>Ibid., p60.

<sup>54</sup>Claudia Rouvel, seminar held at Institut für Jugendbuchforschung, Johann-Wolfgang-Goethe Universität, Frankfurt/Main, 5 February, 1989.

<sup>55</sup>Quoted in Karin Richter, 'Soziale Erkundungen in der Kinder- und Jugendliteratur', in *DDR-Literatur '87 im Gespräch*, pp76-90, (p81).

Die poetische Konzeption, die die meisten Kinderbücher dieses Jahres widerspiegeln, steht im Dienst einer Aktivierung der inneren Kräfte des Lesers und macht ihm seine individuelle Verantwortung für den Verlauf gesellschaftlicher Prozesse im eigenen Land und für die Lösung wichtiger Lebensfragen der Menschheit bewußt. <sup>56</sup>

There is always a danger when writing for younger readers that the demands made of them through such a message may be inappropriate to their dependent status. For teenage readers who tend to rely increasingly on their peer group, fewer concessions have to be made. Richter criticised the attacks sometimes made in children's fiction on aspects of society about which the authors obviously had very strong feelings and against which the young were powerless to act. The criticism should be appropriate for the given age range, therefore where the criticism was aimed at adults it should be restricted to adult literature. While works such as *Karlchen Duckdich* received high praise from the critics and promoted much discussion among children's book specialists on the treatment of children within society, it is likely that Preuß' works, often, as Konrad Müller's comments indicated, dismissed for their perceived concentration on teenage angst, had a far greater and more provocative impact on young readers.

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<sup>56</sup>Karin Richter, 'Kindliche Erwartungen und literarische Angebote. Zu Neuerscheinungen des Kinderbuchverlags Berlin', in *DDR-Literatur '83 im Gespräch* edited by Siegfried Rönisch (Berlin and Weimar, 1984), pp91-110, (p109).



## 4. SOCIALISATION THROUGH FANTASY

In portraying the socialisation process and the conflict between individual and society, many children's authors chose to make use of fantasy during the 1970s and 1980s. This was far from the utopian fantasy common in the West: it provided no miracle solutions. Rather than being used to depict escapism, it tended instead to illustrate a learning process. Authors portrayed a conflict between individual wishes and the demands of society and introduced fantasy to show a temporary phase - a form of isolated adolescence, at the end of which the protagonist returns to normality, either having changed the initial situation or, more commonly, having given up their dreams and illusions and come to terms with reality.

Fiction has been written about the socialising effect external forces and events can have on children who find themselves isolated and at odds with society, but these works run the risk of appearing didactic, seeing the children simply as objects to be educated. On the other hand, it is difficult for any child to make a conscious decision to change its own life, and a story depicting this would strain credibility. Fantasy, however, is ideal for achieving the same end: by distancing itself, through fantasy, from a life with which it is dissatisfied, the child can come to see that life in a new light, appreciate its merits, and return reformed *through its own choice*. Through the introduction of the unreal into a familiar situation, the protagonist, and by association the reader, is forced to step back and reassess areas which may have been taken for granted. When Christa Kozik, for example, introduces an angel into everyday Berlin life in *Der Engel mit dem goldenen Schnurrbart* (1983), she is able to convey many salient points about GDR society without the risk of appearing superficial or ideologically strident, and to make a more lasting impression than any polemic on a similar theme could do.

In contrast to the West, where fantasy is an intrinsic part of children's literature (in Britain in particular the two are so inextricably linked that the words 'children's literature' have a tendency to conjure up images of animate toys, motoring toads and flying children) fantasy never became a well established component of children's fiction in the GDR. Fairy tales and especially fantastical nonsense stories were initially rejected as undesirable reminiscences of bourgeois culture. This early stance, which Emmrich refers to as 'eine enge, mißverständene

Realismusauffassung'<sup>1</sup>, was taken in the belief that fantasy had been used by bourgeois authors to protect and prolong their children's innocence, creating an isolated child world, detached from the 'adult' realities of life. Under socialism it was felt that, since the adult and child worlds were subject to the same socioeconomic conditions and therefore in theory inseparable, children should be introduced to these realities at an early stage in order to enable them to cope with any eventuality. Kurt Hager, for example, in an article on cultural policy, stated:

Der Sozialismus bedarf einer Kunst, die fest auf die Wirklichkeit gegründet ist, auf Entdeckungsfahrt in diese Wirklichkeit und ihre Zukunftsmöglichkeiten auszieht. <sup>2</sup>

The early attitude towards fantasy is explicable in terms of the political situation within the GDR. During the formative years of the State, authors were expected to illustrate, through children's stories, ideal patterns of behaviour within the new society, thus non-fantasy stories became the norm. Moreover, authoritarian leaderships such as that which emerged out of the early, uncertain years are traditionally suspicious of fantasy, precisely because the imagination cannot be controlled.

Works which attempted to incorporate fairytale characteristics, Ludwig Renn's *Nobi*, which appeared in 1955, for example, were met with misunderstanding and disapproval by the critics. It was not until the early 1960s, when organised theoretical debate among authors and critics of children's literature began, notably with the introduction of the Kinderbuchverlag's periodical *Beiträge...* and the annual Children's Book Week, that the position of fantasy came under review. Its use finally began to be accepted after the 1965 Children's Book Week in Schwerin, where Hans Koch in his opening paper, 'Phantasie und Realität in der Kinderliteratur', called upon authors to broaden the horizons of children's imaginations by increasing their repertoire of artistic expression.

A rigid commitment to portrayals based on everyday life had had a tendency to produce bland and unimaginative literature, as Peter Hacks illustrated to comic effect in *Ein Märchen für Claudias Puppe* (1975), a story for the over-8s. Claudia's doll cannot sleep and an adult, apparently devoid

<sup>1</sup>Christian Emmrich, Peter Beyer, Egon Schmidt, 'Prosaliteratur für Kinder', in *Literatur für Kinder und Jugendliche in der DDR*, edited by Christian Emmrich (Berlin, 1981), p244.

<sup>2</sup>Kurt Hager, 'Zu Fragen der Kulturpolitik', in *Neues Deutschland* 8 July, 1972, p5.

of imagination, attempts to tell her a bedtime story about a smith, a schoolgirl and the school's faulty central heating system. Claudia constantly interrupts, expressing her disapproval.

*Es war ein kleines Schulmädchen. Ihr Vater war Grobschmied in dem Dorf Dümde.*

- Ein Schulmädchen? fragt Claudia.

- Ja, sicher.

- Ich denke, sie war eine Prinzessin.

- Aber es geht nicht. Ihr Vater war doch der Grobschmied.

- Es muß gehen, sagt Claudia. Meine Puppe zieht Prinzessinnen allen anderen Berufen vor.

- Na gut. Aber um die Schule kommt sie nicht herum. <sup>3</sup>

The adult's choice of characters also fails to impress the girl, who had expected a fairy tale, as her interjections make clear:

*Und da sah sie einen Mann, der sich mit einem Werkzeug an der Zentralheizung zu schaffen machte.*

- Aha, sagte Claudia. Der Prinz.

- Das glaube ich nun doch nicht. Er ist wirklich nicht mehr der Jüngste, und er hat einen billigen Anzug am Leibe und Ölflecken an dem Anzug.

- Verstehe, sagt Claudia. Ein Schweinehirt. <sup>4</sup>

The child is constantly frustrated by the lack of fantasy within the tale, finally losing patience with what she refers to as 'eine sehr häßliche Geschichte' <sup>5</sup> and finishing the story herself in the manner of a fairy tale, Hacks conveying the message that these can illustrate reality equally well.

- Aber meine Geschichte ist wahr.

- Meine Geschichte ist ein Märchen, sagt Claudia, und ich finde sie wahr genug.

Dann fügt sie hinzu:

So wahr wie Ihre schon lange.

Und dann:

Ebenso wahr, aber sehr viel schöner. <sup>6</sup>

With the changes which came about within the field of literature during the 1970s and 1980s, authors began to experiment more with form, and stories for both adults and children were no longer necessarily so

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<sup>3</sup>Peter Hacks, *Meta Morfoß und Ein Märchen für Claudias Puppe* (Berlin, 1975), pp40-41.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp46-48.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p52.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., pp56-57.

directly tied to reality. Whereas previously, fantastical elements had often been revealed to be just a dream, high fantasy, where fantastical beings apparently existed within the 'real' world began to emerge. However, the early mistrust of the use of fantastical elements was such as to encourage the evolution of a specifically functional and constructive form of fantasy, set very firmly in contemporary GDR society and used particularly in the portrayal of socialisation.

The use of this constructive fantasy is clearly mirrored in Gunter Preuß' *Annabella und der Große Zauberer* (1986). Frau Miglitz' fantastical stories are in part responsible for Annabella's isolation and these are dismissed in favour of Frau Sebastian's more relevant tales of 'HEUTELAND'. In an interview in 1987, Preuß stated his beliefs about the use of fantasy:

Wenn ich für Kinder schreibe, darf ich ihnen keine Welt vorgaukeln, die sie in ihrem Denken und Fühlen von der unseren entfernt. So phantastisch die jeweilige Geschichte auch sein und auf welchem Stern sie auch immer spielen mag, sie muß Kindern ermöglichen, 'unsere Welt' zu entdecken, eigene Zugänge zu ihr zu finden, sich in ihr als denkendes und handelndes Wesen zu begreifen und anzunehmen.<sup>7</sup>

The works discussed below - Waldemar Spender's *Wie Filip Treumel einen Freund erfand* (1978), Peter Abraham's *Das Schulgespenst* (1978), Gerti Tetzner's *Maxi* (1979), Christa Kozik's *Der Engel mit dem goldenen Schnurrbart* (1983) and Benno Pludra's *Das Herz des Piraten* (1985) - all demonstrate the various ways in which fantasy was used during the latter years of the GDR to convey a similar message. Each is set very firmly in everyday GDR society and introduces a fantastical element in order to provoke readers to step back from this everyday world and reassess it in a new light. In the more optimistic examples the individual is able to transform his or her environment. Other stories concentrate on the compromises forced upon the individual by society and encourage the reader to question the necessity for conformity.

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<sup>7</sup>Michael Hinze, 'Interview mit Gunter Preuß, Alex-Wedding-Preisträger 1986', in *Beiträge...* 82 (1987), pp5-10, (p7).

## Self-assertion through fantasy

The earlier two of these works present a more optimistic picture than the others of the individual's ability to influence society. In these, the beliefs of the individual are consolidated through the fantasy, and it is society which unreservedly recognises its mistakes. Peter Abraham in his book for younger readers (the story was designated by the publishers for the 8 and over age group) uses fantasy to enable his protagonist to resist the demands made of her by her environment. *Das Schulgespenst* tells the story of Carola, a somewhat unruly and tomboyish girl who dreams up a ghost to take her place at school so that she can devote her time to more interesting activities. Once they have swapped places, the new Carola at school is initially distinguished from the old only by the blue ribbon in her hair. Their characters, however, are very different:

Das blaugeschleifte Mädchen betrachtete sich ebenfalls im Spiegel und rief: "Ach, was bin ich doch für ein niedliches, artiges, arbeitsames, kluges, sauberes Mädchen!" <sup>8</sup>

The ghost which Carola has called into existence represents her nightmare - the feminine qualities traditionally expected of young girls. She curls her hair, plays with skipping ropes and dolls' prams, and behaves perfectly at school, much to Carola's disgust. The sudden personality change which other characters, unaware of the ghost's existence, perceive in Carola creates many comic situations. The new Carola is charming, polite and adheres rigidly rules and regulations. Her parents in particular are uncertain how to react to the apparent perfection in their daughter:

"Du darfst ausnahmsweise den Krimi mit ansehen, weil du heute so gute Zensuren bekommen hast und weil morgen Wandertag ist."  
"Oh, nein", sagte das Mädchen, "es ist sehr unpädagogisch von dir, ein Kind in meinem Alter den Krimi sehen zu lassen. Ich gehe ins Bett. Das ist viel gesünder!" <sup>9</sup>

Through the swapping of places, Abraham allows Carola as a ghost, unseen by most, to overhear conversations to which she would not normally be witness. Through these, it is made clear to the readers that the majority who know her prefer the old Carola, despite her unconventional behaviour, to the new version who behaves according to society's ideals.

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<sup>8</sup>Peter Abraham, *Das Schulgespenst* (Berlin, 1978), p21.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p61.



All are shown to welcome the apparent return to normality when Carola finally manages to swap places again with the ghost. Through the use of fantasy, Abraham demonstrates the importance of accepting individuals as they are, encouraging readers to question the notion of conformity by illustrating that adherence to prescribed patterns of behaviour is not necessarily as desirable as many claim.

Waldemar Spender's *Wie Filip Treumel einen Freund erfand*, written for the 10 and over age group, takes this message a step further, showing how children actively change their environment for the better by campaigning against overwhelming conformity. The story tells how Filip and his family have moved from their dark, narrow flat in Klein-Wurzig to the bright, new surroundings of Neustadt.

Es sind durchaus kluge Leute, die diese Stadt ausgedacht haben. Neustadt hat breite Straßen, mit jungen Bäumen an beiden Seiten, es hat Kaufhallen, Kinderkrippen, Kindergärten und Schulen, es hat Blumenbeete, Fußgängerschutzwege und Spielplätze. Und eine Kinderbücherei mit einer netten Bibliothekarin. Überhaupt hat Neustadt alles, was man zum Leben braucht.<sup>10</sup>

Spender's descriptions present a town which has been a little too well planned. The town functions but is inhuman in character - the streets have not even been given names. The functional atmosphere suits the town's adults, but the story makes clear the frustrations of the children, faced with living in an environment where there is no room for initiative or creativity. Where his parents use the adjective 'perfekt' to describe their surroundings, Filip prefers to think of them as 'fertig':

Sogar sein schönes, neues Zimmer kam Filip so fertig vor, daß er sich darin nicht mehr so recht wohl fühlte.<sup>11</sup>

The fantasy element within the story arises out of the conflict between the children's desires and the adult-orientated environment. In a motif not infrequent in GDR children's literature, Filip's parents are shown to have extra work commitments in Neustadt and consequently little time for their son. Maxim, a life-sized bear, appears as compensation for Filip's loneliness, providing the warmth, understanding and sympathy the boy misses. The fact that this figure is specifically a bear is also connected with the conformity expected by adults of their children. Maxim is a giant

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<sup>10</sup>Waldemar Spender, *Wie Filip Treumel einen Freund erfand* (Berlin, 1978), p8.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p15.

version of a toy bear Filip had asked for and did not receive for his birthday:

Filip fiel es so schwer, seine Enttäuschung zu verbergen, daß das sogar seinem Vater auffiel.  
"Ein Junge von neun", hatte er gesagt, "ein Konstrukteur von morgen, ein fast erwachsener Mann spielt doch nicht mehr mit Teddybären!"<sup>12</sup>

Filip's parents, like the majority of adults in Spender's story, lack imagination. Spender here indicates an essential divide between adults and children where fantasy is concerned. The latter is a prerequisite for the ability to see Maxim, and consequently the bear remains visible only to the town's children. Through this unconventional figure, the children learn to take an active and creative role in the responsibility for their town and discover that they can change their environment. He leads them in imaginative activities such as chalking colourful pictures on pavements or painting the dull walls of the nearby factory. The adults' only clue to Maxim's existence is his reproachful growling, heard whenever they oppose the children's new activities.

The story ends optimistically, with the adults, including such representatives of society as the mayor, the leader of the Young Pioneers and the town architect, recognising the children's discontent and acting upon it. The children's creativity has been frustrated by the completeness of the town, and the adults seek to remedy this. Spender makes it clear that adults must reassess their behaviour and take children into consideration in all their decisions, since these will ultimately affect the young. In placing this message in a children's book, the author encourages the young to make their opinions felt, not simply to accept what they are given but to take responsibility for their own futures and demand their own say. However, the author also makes clear that he is not advocating a reversal of the original situation, with the creation of a town which meets only the children's needs. This initial interpretation of Maxim's philosophy by the young characters is dismissed:

"Diese Stadt ist unsere Stadt", sagt Filip. Und indem er das sagt, denkt er an seine Eltern und weiß, daß alles nicht stimmt. "Und eine Stadt der Erwachsenen", versucht er deshalb zu ergänzen, "eine Stadt, in der sich die Jungen und die Alten vertragen können und müssen." Aber der zweite Teil seiner Rede ist in dem allgemeinen Gebrüll nicht mehr zu verstehen.

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p18.

“Diese Stadt ist unsere Stadt”, rufen die Kinder im Chor und hüpfen von ihren Plätzen.

“Du hast mich verstanden, mein Sohn,” kann Maxim Filip gerade noch zuraunen.<sup>13</sup>

Spender shows how the planning of the town, and by association society, must be based on an equal partnership between children and adults. Before he leaves to continue his work elsewhere, the bear’s words emphasise to the young the significance of their responsibility for the world around them:

“Diese Stadt ist in der Tat eure Stadt. Sie in Besitz zu nehmen aber heißt sich ihrer anzunehmen, sie zu verändern, um sie für alle zu erschließen und freundlicher zu machen.”<sup>14</sup>

This, essentially, is the message of the story to the young readers. Through the introduction of the fantasy element in the form of the bear, both children and adults are shown to reassess their situation, to review their actions and to act to reform their environment through cooperation. This enables the author to discourage young readers from unquestioning conformity and to encourage self-assertion.

In each of the above stories it is society which changes or recognises its faults. Each somewhat simplistically portrays an encounter between right and wrong, resulting in the triumph of individuality and concession on the part of society. Many of the later works which made use of fantasy in this way portrayed a far more ambiguous situation, where criticism of society’s demands and expectations was made, but where portrayals focussed on the enforced compromise of the individual’s wishes.

### Conformity and compromise

The following three stories, *Maxi*, *Das Herz des Piraten*, and *Der Engel mit dem goldenen Schnurrbart*, demonstrate how fantasy progressed during the ensuing years, being used to depict a more complex confrontation between individual and society and making far greater demands of the young readers.

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p52.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p65.



The works encompass several themes common to the children's literature of this period - the stigma attached to single-parent families, for example, and the neglect faced by the young because of their parents' work. The fantasy element enables the central character and thus the readers to consider the effects and significance of such phenomena. In each, the fantasy stems from the dissatisfaction of the child with its own life. After the learning process which the fantasy element represents, each child returns to its original life, having failed to achieve its desires and having made little impact on its environment. These endings particularly provoked thought among adults involved in the field of children's books, who singled out works such as these to illustrate their discussions on the relationship between individual and society.

Gerti Tetzner's *Maxi* tells of a young girl whose desire to conform to society's expectations in both her school life and her home life lead to her transformation into two of her classmates, first Jacqueline then Katja, both of whom she considers to have more desirable existences. Through these fantastic transformations, she is shown to appreciate the merits of her own life, to which she eventually returns. Throughout the story, the author illustrates the pressures on the individual to conform, and, critical of these, emphasises the importance of accepting individuality.

Tetzner's story, like Preuß' works, which were dealt with in the previous chapter, uses the figure of the teacher to voice criticism of an education system which placed great emphasis on academic achievement alone. Pupils who, like Jacqueline, achieve good results, receive preferential treatment from Frau Nenneweiß. Maxi's school work, despite her efforts, is not good, and she is consequently led to believe that she is a failure and dreads each school day.

Robbed of self-confidence by her schooling, Maxi's problems are exacerbated by her difficult home life. This is dominated by the absence of her father. Since his departure, her mother has trained as a tram driver and found full time employment, which constantly leaves her too exhausted to devote much of her attention to her daughter. She continually puts pressure on her daughter to improve her school work in order to fare better in life. Tetzner demonstrates the girl's desire for the adult guidance she lacks perhaps most clearly in Maxi's observation of a small lime tree growing in the shade of a large maple:

Jetzt hingen die Lindenblätter gelb und schlaff an den Zweigen. Sie bewegten sich im leisesten Wind. Es sah aus, als ob sie fröhen oder aufgereggt wären. Der dicke Vater Ahorn rauschte hin und wieder würdevoll. Sicherlich sagte er etwas Ruhiges und Kluges zu der Kleinen. Auch seine Blätter waren schon angegilbt. Aber er hatte in seinem langen Baumleben viele Herbststürme und Winter überstanden und fürchtete sich nicht mehr. Während Maxi die beiden Bäume beobachtete, schien ihr, auch die Lindenzweige zitterten nicht mehr. Vielleicht hatten die Worte des großen Ahorns die kleine Linde tapfer gemacht; er hielt seine Äste ja den ganzen Winter wie ein Dach über sie. Schade, daß ich keine Linde unter solch einem Ahorn bin, dachte Maxi.<sup>15</sup>

The fantasy element within Tetzner's story represents Maxi's desire to conform to social norms. Thus when she first transforms into Jacqueline, she does so not only because of Jacqueline's success at school, but because of the girl's apparently friendly and sympathetic father. However, the story soon reveals that, despite popularity with her teacher and her indulgent parents, this is not the ideal life it had appeared from the outside. Jacqueline's existence is a highly regimented one:

Jeder Jacqueline-Tag war lang und anstrengend und genau eingeteilt: Morgens zum Zähltakt des Vaters einatmen und Arme kreisen und Rumpf beugen ..., vor der Schultafel schreiben und rechnen und alle Merksätze lernen ..., schwimmen und schwimmen und schwimmen ..., zu Hause schreiben und rechnen und Klassenarbeiten üben ..., ein bißchen fernsehen oder Versteck spielen ..., Ranzen packen und Schuhe putzen und alles dem Vater vorzeigen ...

Jeder Tag war wie gestern und wie morgen.<sup>16</sup>

Her father, a swimming instructor, expects a great deal of his daughter and the constant need for his approval proves exhausting. Tetzner shows that the effort required on the part of this 'ideal' child is destructive to the child's personal development. Jacqueline is incapable of independent thought or decision-making.

Wenn mir keiner sagt, was ich gut oder schlecht gemacht habe, weiß ich nicht mehr, was richtig oder falsch ist. Warum bin ich nur ruhig und zufrieden, wenn mich einer lobt?<sup>17</sup>

Similar discoveries are made through Maxi's transformation into Katja. The freedom and apparent lack of concern about her poor

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<sup>15</sup>Gerti Tetzner, *Maxi* (Berlin, 1979), pp20-22.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, p36.

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*, p49.



performance at school which Maxi admires is revealed to be the result of serious neglect at home. The criterion of the evening meal table is used again to represent the quality of family life: meals are never taken together, and despite now having a father, mother and brother, Maxi has no one to talk to.

Endlich mußte sie mal richtig losschwatzen.  
Doch wer hörte ihr zu?  
Die Joppe ihres Vaters hing nicht im Korridor.  
Vom Abendbrottisch fehlten zwei Brettchen. <sup>18</sup>

With the return of Maxi to her own life, Tetzner depicts the completion of the learning process. The fantasy element within the story does not enable Maxi simply to wish for a father for herself or for a more comfortable lifestyle. She is shown instead to mature through her broadened knowledge of life. Maxi's life has not changed, nor have the attitudes of others towards her. She has simply learnt through her experiences to appreciate the merits of her own life and consequently has come to relinquish her initial desires.

Despite surrendering her dreams, her experiences through the transformations are thus shown to be not entirely negative. The implication is that these dreams of conformity had been imposed upon her and she has now overcome her fears, recognised her many talents, and come to appreciate the importance of self-acceptance. Maxi's attempts to conform fail but are finally dismissed as unnecessary. In a significant school scene in which Jacqueline, chosen by Frau Nenneweiß to play the starring role of Snow White, has the show stolen from her by Katja, playing the less desirable role of the wicked step-mother, the author emphasises that the role itself is not the most important factor but the success which the individual is able to make of that role.

The encouragement of self-acceptance and the suspicion of conformity were also apparent in Tetzner's writing for adults. Christel Hildebrandt's observations on *Karen W.* could equally be applied to *Maxi*:

Gerade das wollte Gerti Tetzner in ihrem Roman: keine fertigen Lösungen und klaren Ideale zeigen, sondern Mut machen, Entscheidungen zu hinterfragen und ein bewußtes, selbstbestimmtes Leben zu leben. Zu viel erscheint ihr automatisch, gelangt gar nicht mehr ins Bewußtsein. Wer von der Norm absticht, bekommt seine

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<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p63.

Fremdheit in der Gesellschaft zu spüren. Gerti Tetzner kritisiert nicht die Grundlagen des Staates, sondern die zu große Konformität.<sup>19</sup>

However, it remains questionable whether this was a suitable message for the designated age group. At times Tetzner's message appears brutally rational in its attempt to emphasise self-acceptance, to the point of denying the young any dreams of self-improvement:

Warum sollte sie erst etwas werden? War sie jetzt nichts? Sie war ein Mädchen, das schwimmen konnte und Theater spielen, Zwiebelschneider verkaufen, Hunde pflegen, paddeln, Würstchen braten, Straßenbahnhaltestellen ansagen und vielleicht noch dies und das. Zugegeben, sie war nicht das schönste Mädchen und konnte nicht besonders gut schreiben und auswendig Gelerntes sagen, sie würde wohl nie die besten Zensuren haben. Aber war sie deshalb noch nichts, mußte sie erst etwas werden? <sup>20</sup>

It is conceivable that the young readers would see the ending of the story simply in terms of a central figure forced to give up her dreams and to learn to accept her difficult home life. As with many of the stories which highlighted the effect of work commitments on the family, the child is shown to make compromises in its demands, coming to recognise the importance of her mother's work and to understand that work must often take precedence over family life. It is doubtful whether the 8-year-old readers for whom the book was designated would be able to appreciate the implication that Maxi's dreams of a different life are indicative of enforced conformity. At the end of Wolfgang Predel's review of *Maxi*, published in the *Beiträge...*, he reproduces comments made by readers of 12 and over, who had been asked to give their opinions on the book. It is unclear whether the book was offered for comment to the recommended 8-year-old readership. The comments are largely negative: many had been reluctant to finish the book, and appeared disappointed with the lack of action in this fantasy story, and bored by Maxi's conversations with the 'Großen Geist', the fantasy being who grants her wishes to transform and with whom she discusses her feelings about her life. The most favourable comments came from a 15-year-old girl, who appeared to appreciate the message of the story but, interestingly, expressed doubts about the suitability of the book for younger readers:

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<sup>19</sup>Christel Hildebrandt, *Zwölf schreibende Frauen in der DDR : Zu den Schreibbedingungen von Schriftstellerinnen in der DDR in den 70er Jahren* (Hamburg, 1984), pp110-111.

<sup>20</sup>*Maxi*, p97.

Man erkennt, daß aus dem Mädchen Maxi doch noch etwas wird (die Mutter behauptet ja immer das Gegenteil).  
Ich finde jedoch, daß ein Schüler der 2. - 4. Klasse diesen wesentlichen Inhalt schwer erkennen kann.<sup>21</sup>

In *Das Herz des Piraten* Benno Pludra also uses fantasy to convey a message of self-acceptance, depicting a learning process, at the end of which the protagonist gives up her initial dreams and rejects society's demands for conformity. The story tells of 10-year-old Jessi, living with her mother in a small coastal village, of her dissatisfaction with her home life, and in particular of her wish for the father she has never seen. Again the theme of the neglect of the children of working single mothers is prominent. Jessi's mother works long hours at the chicken farm and spends much of her free time in town so that communication often occurs only through scribbled shopping lists left before she sets out for work in the morning:

Nun wird es dauern, bis sie kommt. Entweder in der halben Nacht oder im finsternen Morgen. Dann kommt sie nur, die Kleider zu wechseln, und rennt gleich wieder zur Geflügelfarm; denn bei den Hühnern muß sie pünktlich sein. Die wollen ihr Futter, die brauchen Wasser, die sind an Ordnung gewöhnt und können nicht für sich selber sorgen. Jessi hingegen kann.<sup>22</sup>

Thus during the summer holidays, in which the plot is set, Jessi often finds herself alone and with no one to talk to. Unusually for stories of this kind, authority-figures representing society are scarce. However, the pressure on Jessi to conform is still very much in evidence. It comes instead from her family (her grandmother insists on Jessi's mother's need to find a husband) and from the general atmosphere in the village where the single-parent family is tolerated only superficially. Jessi's argument with her friend Tine brings the prejudices into the open:

“Solche wie dich”, sagt Tine, “hätte man früher verbrannt. ...” ...  
Sie macht auf einmal die Augen schmal, und das bedeutet, sie wird jetzt ganz was Schlimmes sagen, das Schlimmste überhaupt, und Tine sagt: “Gekommen ist alles, weil du keinen Vater hast. Weil du den nicht hast. Nicht mal gesehen, nicht mal das. Da nimmst du dir darum den Stein.” Sie beugt sich ein wenig vor, die Augen wieder weit geöffnet, wasserhell. “Habe ich recht? Es ist gekommen, weil

<sup>21</sup>Wolfgang Predel, ‘Gerti Tetzner: “Maxi”, Der Kinderbuchverlag Berlin’, in *Beiträge...* 59 (1981), pp42-43, (p43).

<sup>22</sup>Benno Pludra, *Das Herz des Piraten* (Berlin, 1985), p18.

du keinen Vater hast und deine Mutter keinen Mann. Ihr seid wie ein Hund ohne Schwanz."

"Wer sagt so was?" fragt Jessi, aber so leise, daß sie es selber kaum hört, und Tine sagt: "Das sagen alle." <sup>23</sup>

The fantasy element within the story, arises in the form of the stone to which Tine refers. While others see simply a stone which the girl has found on the beach, Jessi speaks with it and feels its warmth, and it professes to be the heart of the late pirate William Reds. As in *Maxi*, the fantasy is linked very closely to Jessi's apparent need for a father figure and stems from her desire for conformity at home. She has never seen this father, a circus artist, and knows of him only what she has gleaned from gossip overheard in the village, but has come to idealise him, and with the discovery of the stone, the two figures become linked - the dashing pirate and the exotic showman. <sup>24</sup> Jessi is thus horrified and deeply hurt when she discovers her mother's new relationship with a small and corpulent man from town, who contrasts starkly with her ideal image of a father.

In communicating with the stone, Jessi increasingly isolates herself from those around her who consider her behaviour eccentric. However, Pludra portrays this isolation as a productive period. The stone claims to have been separated from his father, a smuggler, when young and sympathises with her problems. The fantasy thus not only enriches Jessi's dull days and alleviates her loneliness, but it also helps her to come to terms with her situation.

Pludra's story ends with the implication that Jessi, like Maxi, will return to her everyday life (particularly now that the school holidays are over) and forgo her initial dreams. The stone heart is returned to the sea to be reunited with the pirate and, having met and ultimately been disappointed by her father when he unexpectedly appears in the village with his travelling show, Jessi throws his talisman into the sea shortly afterwards. While Pludra claimed, in the typical cynical style with which he tended to refer to his own works,<sup>25</sup> that he had included the latter incident simply because it seemed the tidiest way to end the story after the

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<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p75.

<sup>24</sup>In the award-winning DEFA film of the book both characters were played by the same actor.

<sup>25</sup>Discussion at conference 'Darstellung von Geschichte und Zeitgeschichte in der Kinder- und Jugendliteratur der DDR' organised by Roter Elefant eV, Arbeitskreis Kinder-Bücher-Medien, Bremen, 24-26 November, 1989.



heart's departure, others, Hans-Dieter Schmidt, Professor of Psychology at the Humboldt Universität, for example, saw the disposal of the talisman as symbolic of the destruction of Jessi's fantasy by the real world:

Das letztgenannte Ereignis dokumentiert, wie ich es sehe, auf eine sehr eindringliche Weise, daß die konkrete, oft harte Realität ihres Lebens Jessis geheimnisvoll-schöne Fiktion des Piratenherzens einholen und zunichte machen *muß*.<sup>26</sup>

As in Tetzner's story, this ending is not depicted entirely in negative terms. Through distancing herself from her problems, Jessi has gained in her sense of self-worth. It is evident from her decision, at the end of the story, to accept the unconventional friendship of a boy two years her junior that she has the confidence to retain a high degree of individuality. Her argument with her mother, in favour of remaining in the village rather than moving to town to live with the mother's new partner, also demonstrates Jessi's recognition that the conformity of the conventional family which she had originally desired is not necessarily ideal.

Again, as with *Maxi*, it is unclear to what extent the work was understood by its younger readers. Critics have argued strongly about the meaning and message of *Das Herz des Piraten*. Pludra's works were well respected throughout the German-speaking world, and this book was awarded the Maxim-Gorki-Prize (presented by the IBBY sections of the socialist countries) in 1987 and was also nominated for the West German 'Deutscher Jugendliteraturpreis'. In the GDR, his works were given the attention usually devoted only to literature for adults, and when *Das Herz des Piraten* appeared, discussion was considerable. An edition of 'Für und Wider', a series of discussions on topical texts published in the *Weimarer Beiträge*, was devoted to the book in 1986. The six critics who contributed each had very different interpretations of the story. While Karin Kögel, for example, concentrated on the conflict portrayed between the essentially good child and the evil pirate with the heart as go-between, Reiner Neubert wrote about the fairytale elements of the story, for example the importance of the number three, and Marianne Oy contemplated the mother-child relationship. Pludra had stated of writing for children:

Ein Kinderbuch soll so geschrieben sein, daß es von kleinen und großen Leuten gelesen werden kann mit gleicher Freude und

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<sup>26</sup>Hans-Dieter Schmidt, "Das Herz des Piraten" von Benno Pludra (Für und Wider)', in *Weimarer Beiträge* 11/1986, pp1883-1904, (p1903).



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However, when adult critics disagreed even about the storyline, some, for example, certain that Jessi's mother had decided to marry her new suitor and move to town, others equally certain that she had not, it must be asked to what extent young readers (the cover states that it is suitable for readers of 10 and over) were able to appreciate this story. Hans-Dieter Schmidt felt that several ideas within the story would be comprehensible to the young only with the aid of a teacher or other adult.

Christian Emmrich, in his contribution to the debate in the *Weimarer Beiträge*, suggested that the story would be understood on different levels by readers of different age groups:

Junge Leser werden vielleicht stärker durch die märchenhaft-phantastischen Elemente gefesselt; ältere dagegen werden von dem Schicksal des Kindes betroffen sein <sup>28</sup>

If this was the case, many young readers may have been disappointed. The fantasy elements provide little excitement, but serve rather to highlight specific elements within the everyday story Pludra presents.

Some reviewers were critical of this use of fantasy by Pludra. Perhaps influenced by the early stance taken against fantasy in the GDR, they felt that no valid connection could be made between the two strands of the story. Konrad Müller, for example, writing in the *Beiträge...*, stated:

Die Fabel gibt - so erzählt - tatsächlich nicht allzuviel her. Den Grund sehe ich vor allem darin, daß zwei eigentlich völlig verschiedene Dinge miteinander verknüpft werden sollen: Ein Märchen und ein sehr heutiges Problem. Aber das Märchen hat keine Beziehung zur Minifamilie, in der Jessi die eine Hälfte darstellt, es kann zur Problematik, wie man wieder ein komplettes Dreigespann werden kann, nichts beisteuern, schon gar nichts lösen. <sup>29</sup>

He welcomed the return to 'normality' which the dispatch of both

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<sup>27</sup>Quoted in *Das Kinderbuch : Gedanken und Ansichten*, edited by Renate Gollmitz (Berlin, 1983), p159.

<sup>28</sup>Christian Emmrich, *Weimarer Beiträge* 11/1986, pp1883-1904, (p1886).

<sup>29</sup>Konrad Müller, 'Benno Pludra: "Das Herz des Piraten", Illustrationen Gerhard Großmann; Der Kinderbuchverlag Berlin 1985', in *Beiträge...* 82 (1987), pp63-65, (p63).

stone and chain to the sea entailed:

Die Zeit der Märchen ist vorbei, und die schwärmerische Vatersehnsucht ist dahin - das selbstentschiedene Aufgeben einer Illusion und ein erheblicher Realitätsgewinn! <sup>30</sup>

These comments represent a very narrow interpretation of the story. The central issue is not how to become a nuclear family but the questioning of the pressure placed on individuals to conform to this social norm. Through this tale, Pludra draws attention to the problems of single-parent families and the social pressures experienced by them. The fantasy element represents a learning process through which the author makes clear his views on the importance of self-acceptance and the refusal to bow to norms which restrict the free development of the individual. As adult critics were aware, this was to become one of Pludra's strongest creeds during the final years of the GDR <sup>31</sup>. It is doubtful, however, whether 10-year-old readers would reach this conclusion without adult assistance.

Christa Kozik, in *Der Engel mit dem goldenen Schnurrbart*, was perhaps more successful in her use of fantasy to provoke her readers to consider the importance of individuality and to question the necessity for conformity. Also written for the over-10 age group, the story again focuses on a young protagonist with a difficult family life. Ten-year-old Lilli lives on the twenty-first floor of a block of flats in the centre of Berlin with her temperamental mother and her fifth father, Papa Karl. Lilli is, at the outset of the tale, alone at home and ill with jaundice when the angel Ambrosius lands on her windowsill. The angel is adopted by Lilli's mother, despite bureaucratic difficulties due to the lack of a birth certificate, and attends school with Lilli after the head teacher has laid down certain ground rules. However, at the end of the story, Ambrosius feels forced to leave, partly as a result of Lilli's jealousy, but above all because of the constant pressure on the angel to conform to human conditions on earth.

Kozik's book received high praise from children's book critics. Marianne Krumrey, in her review of the book in the *Beiträge...* proclaimed:

Es ist ein schönes, ein rundum gelungenes, ein lustiges und doch ernsthaftes, ein charmantes und liebenswertes Buch, das uns Christa

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<sup>30</sup>Ibid., p64.

<sup>31</sup>See Introduction, p11.

Kožik hier geschrieben hat.<sup>32</sup>

It was applauded, both for its poetic, wistful, yet often humorous style and for its courage in tackling this unconventional subject matter. By introducing a fantastical element into a very real setting, Christa Kožik forces the readers to look at that setting in a different light and to reassess attitudes and rules of behaviour which they may have taken for granted. Her intention was to use fantasy to highlight certain aspects of 'reality'.

Mein Hauptanliegen ist also, real-phantastisch zu erzählen, Probleme unseres Alltags zu verbinden mit einem Überbau an phantastischen Elementen, die aber auch immer wieder zurückwirken auf die Realität. Phantasie ist ja nicht das Gegenteil von Realität! Die Phantasie, das kann man bei Marx nachlesen, erhebt über die Wirklichkeit, um tiefer in sie einzudringen. Die Quelle der Phantasie wird immer die Realität sein.<sup>33</sup>

The fact that the fantastical element is an angel and the setting the GDR intensifies the message behind the juxtaposition of reality and fantasy. Kožik uses the figure and the various responses to the angel's presence throughout the story to highlight attitudes towards individuality and conformity. Initial confrontations usually occur to comic effect. Papa Karl's first reaction to the angel, for instance, is not one of surprise, but a need to know how he, as a Marxist, should regard such a being:

Papa Karl kratzte sich am Kopf und stellte die morgenschwere Frage: "Sind Engel eigentlich Verbündete der Arbeiterklasse?"<sup>34</sup>

The story gradually leads the reader to recognise the dangers inherent in the tendency to compartmentalise individuals in this way. One scene towards the end of the story, depicting Lilli and her family unpacking the 'winged figures' for the Christmas tree, indicates that this tendency will ultimately deprive the angel of his identity:

Auf dem Karton, in dem goldene Weihnachtsengel mit Wachsgesichtern und Engelshaaren lagen, stand obenauf 'Geflügelte Figuren zum Jahreswechsel'.

"Da hast du's schwarz auf weiß", lachte Papa Karl zu Mama, "man

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<sup>32</sup>Marianne Krumrey, 'Christa Kožik: "Der Engel mit dem goldenen Schnurrbart"; Der Kinderbuchverlag Berlin 1983', in *Beiträge...* 72 (1984), pp72-74, (p74).

<sup>33</sup>Eva-Maria Siegel, 'Eine Flaschenpost ins Meer geworfen ... : Gespräch mit Christa Kožik' in *Beiträge...* 75 (1985), pp46-52, (p50).

<sup>34</sup>Christa Kožik, *Der Engel mit dem goldenen Schnurrbart* (Berlin, 1983), pp25-26.

muß nur die richtigen Worte finden, da läßt sich alles einordnen.”<sup>35</sup>

The angel and his opinions are portrayed throughout in a very favourable light. He has absconded from heaven, where he was something of a black sheep, and is looking for a more rewarding existence. He is interesting and different but above all a tolerant character, who puts up with mockery and insult good-naturedly. By depicting the character as that of an ideal best friend, the author gains the readers' sympathies for Ambrosius from the outset. Kožík relates the various reactions the appearance of the angel evokes from acceptance to mistrust, but makes clear that the majority who know him find their lives improved:

Die Leute freuten sich, wenn sie dem Engel im Hausflur begegneten. Er war eine himmlische Abwechslung, denn in Hochhäusern ist es zuweilen recht eintönig, weil die meisten Leute die Tür schnell hinter sich zumachen.<sup>36</sup>

On the whole, individuals are shown to react kindly to the angel, while institutions and representatives of the Establishment are more suspicious. It is the latter characters who eventually force the angel to leave through their severe restriction of his individuality. Kožík particularly focuses on Ambrosius' experiences at school to demonstrate the clash between the GDR Establishment and Christianity.

By portraying lessons in which the angel participates, Kožík is able to depict amicable differences of opinions, such as readers had themselves perhaps not experienced. Lilli's form teacher and Ambrosius disagree about the existence of God, the creation of the world and the need to fight for peace. However, the teacher allows Ambrosius to express his opinions freely and does not attempt to dissuade him from these, appreciating the angel's right to his own views. The author makes clear that these discussions with the angel enrich the pupils' lives and that his presence is later missed. These classes, which the pupils are sorry to see end, contrast sharply with those of the head teacher, Doktor König, whose lesson on primitive society as a precursor to communism proves so boring that Ambrosius flies out of the window.

Marianne Krumrey, in her review of the work, felt that the classroom discussions depicted by Kožík displayed conviction on the part of

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<sup>35</sup>Ibid., p119.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., p38.

the author in the persuasive power of the GDR's ideology:

Mir gefällt die Toleranz gegenüber dem christlichen Glauben, die die Autorin vorführt. Lehrer Becher fällt Ambrosius nicht ins Wort und zwingt ihn nicht, etwas einzusehen, was er nicht einsehen will, und Ambrosius ist nicht beleidigt, wenn einige über seine Thesen lächeln, Christa Kožik ist sich der Überzeugungskraft der materialistischen Weltanschauung so sicher, daß sie sie souverän, ohne Zwang ins Feld führt und es für widersinnig hält, ihr durch Verbote und Bestrafungen christlichen Denkens Raum zu schaffen.<sup>37</sup>

It could equally be argued that this stance was taken by the author precisely because of the overwhelming familiarity of GDR ideology to the young. Rather than emphasising its persuasive power, the story highlights the lack of alternative viewpoints permitted by those in authority.

The author's criticism in this respect centres, above all, around the head teacher, Doktor König, who warns Lilli against spending time with Ambrosius, trying to protect her from the angel's unconventional opinions:

“Wir meinen es gut mit dir, Lilli. Sieh mal, so ein Engel, das ist kein Umgang für dich. Er hat eine ganz andere Weltanschauung. Das verstehst du doch sicher.”<sup>38</sup>

His five-point plan of conditions which Ambrosius must meet in order to be accepted at school are indicative of the demands within the educational establishment for conformity. The plan includes the stipulation that the angel must give up flying, and Ambrosius is later encouraged to wear a pullover to prevent him from being tempted to do so. Ambrosius' compliance begins to destroy him: he limps because of the pain walking causes him, he finds grey hairs in his golden moustache and the feathers begin to fall out of his wings.

It is interesting that the author chooses flying rather than his religious beliefs as the essence of the angel's being. Presumably this magical quality was intended to make the angel more appealing to young readers. His beliefs alone could have proved somewhat inaccessible, and flying also symbolically conveys the freedom of the individual. At one

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<sup>37</sup>Marianne Krumrey, in *Beiträge...* 72 (1984), pp73-74.

<sup>38</sup>*Der Engel mit dem goldenen Schnurrbart*, p46.



point, for example, Lilli and Ambrosius are shown flying over Berlin, when Lilli warns the angel not to fly to the left as it is forbidden to cross the border. Following Lilli's observation that 'Fliegen macht wirklich frei' <sup>39</sup>, this represents one of Kožik's most direct attacks on GDR policy. It is the banning of flying, thus the curbing of his individual freedom, which becomes intolerable for the angel and leads to his departure.

"Das Fliegen steckt so drin in mir. Verstehst du mich?"

Lilli schüttelte den Kopf. "Nein. Ich will es auch nicht." <sup>40</sup>

When Lilli refuses to recognise the changes in Ambrosius and even attempts to clip his wings while he is asleep in order to make him stay with her, the angel flies away in the night and it is Lilli alone who must face the consequences, as the final sentence of the book makes clear:

Und mit diesem Schmerz muß Lilli ganz alleine fertig werden. <sup>41</sup>

Although Lilli is partly to blame for Ambrosius' departure, she is pressurised by her school and her education into encouraging the angel to conform. Kožik, while recognising the achievements of the GDR's education system, was critical of the conformity it tended to demand and its apparent aversion to the self-determination which was so needed for the future development of the State:

Unser sozialistisches Bildungssystem ist zu loben. Unsere Gesellschaft ist eine kinderfreundliche Gesellschaft. Aber an einigen selbst erfahrenen Beispielen wurde mir schmerzlich bewußt, daß ein Teil unserer Kinder fleißig, artig, gebildet, aber auch ziemlich 'gezähmt' ist. Sie fügen sich allzuleicht in jedwede Norm ein, die geistige Flexibilität, das eigene Denken lassen zu wünschen übrig. Wenn wir sie ständig in ein Netz von Abhängigkeit zwingen, dann werden sie passiv und lebensuntüchtig. Und Verantwortung muß ja an die nächste Generation weitergegeben werden wie eine Stafette... <sup>42</sup>

Lilli is shown to be an outspoken, headstrong, and very self-confident girl, who is not afraid to say what she thinks:

Lilli war in der Klasse beliebt, weil sie einen ziemlich losen Mund

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<sup>39</sup>Ibid., p31.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., p96.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., p125.

<sup>42</sup>Eva-Maria Siegel, in *Beiträge...* 75 (1985), p48.

hatte, das heißt, daß sie immer sagte, was sie wirklich dachte. Sie wagte auch zu kritisieren, wenn ihr etwas in der Schule nicht gefiel, zum Beispiel, daß die einzige Musikstunde in der Woche immer in der sechsten Stunde war, wenn man vor Müdigkeit schon von der Bank fiel, oder daß man auf dem Schulhof nicht rennen durfte, nur langsam gehen wie Omas und Opas. <sup>43</sup>

Yet even she is unable to resist pressure to force Ambrosius to conform. Less forthright children would presumably have no chance of opposing authority. In a survey of the book carried out by Renate Kraft on 10 - 13-year-old readers, one question centred on Lilli's voicing of her opinions and produced some interesting reactions. Only 32% felt able to express their views as openly as Lilli is shown to. A 13-year-old girl wrote:

Ich getraue es mir einfach nicht. In Büchern ist das so einfach dargestellt, in Wirklichkeit ist es nur selten so. <sup>44</sup>

Another aged 10 complained:

Ich sage meine Meinung meistens so offen wie Lilli. Aber wenn man bei uns in der Schule Probleme hat, wird man überhaupt nicht beachtet. Vor allem werden Vorschläge, die nicht vom Gruppenrat kommen, abgelehnt. Das finde ich nicht richtig. <sup>45</sup>

Kraft saw this as an indication that steps needed to be taken to enable children to express their opinions freely:

Jedoch kann das Ergebnis, daß nur etwa ein Drittel der Befragten sich ohne Einschränkung zu offener Meinungsäußerung bekennt, nicht befriedigen. Wieder einmal mehr ein Anstoß für alle, die ihren Anteil an der Persönlichkeitsentwicklung der Kinder haben, also auch für uns Kinderbibliothekare, ihnen Mut zu machen, sie zu befähigen, ihren Standpunkt zu finden und Probleme zu diskutieren. <sup>46</sup>

Thus the book not only forced its readers to think about the relationship between the individual and authority, but also had a more indirect influence through provoking adult children's book specialists to attempt to address the problems raised.

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<sup>43</sup>*Der Engel...*, p42.

<sup>44</sup>Renate Kraft, Stadtbez., Bibl. Berlin-Lichtenberg, 'Aus einer Umfrage mit Schülern der 5. bis 9. Klasse zu Christa Koziks' "Der Engel mit dem goldenen Schnurrbart", in *Kinderliteratur-Report* 1/1987, pp49-55, (p55).

<sup>45</sup>*Ibid.*, p54.

<sup>46</sup>*Ibid.*, p55.

At first sight, the ending of the story, with the departure of the angel, may appear harsh, particularly in view of Kožík's statements that, when writing for children, it is vital to leave the readers with some degree of hope at the end of the book:

Bei meinen Geschichten muß doch am Ende Harmonie herrschen, es muß alles so ausgehen, daß nicht die Fäden durchgeschnitten sind. Hoffnungslosigkeit kann man Kindern nicht zumuten. So empfinde ich das. Natürlich spielen Tod und Abschied eine Rolle, aber am Ende muß in einem Kinderbuch Hoffnung bleiben, wenigstens ein Lichtschein. <sup>47</sup>

The hope perhaps stems largely from the effect Kožík's work had on those who read it. Kraft's survey shows that young readers' reactions to the book were extremely favourable, despite some critics' initial misgivings. In separate research carried out among young readers into their interpretation of the story, children were asked to provide their own conclusion to Kožík's story. At a seminar of the DDR-Zentrum für Kinderliteratur in 1987 <sup>48</sup> Karin Richter quoted one of these endings in which the child had demonstrated understanding of Ambrosius' predicament by reversing the situation. Lilli flies with the angel up to heaven, grows wings, but is no longer allowed to walk. When she is discovered doing so, some of the angels threaten to cut off her feet. She awakes to find that this is only a dream, but one which gives her the insight and determination to fight those in authority to convince them to allow the angel to keep his identity.

In each of the above stories fantasy and 'reality' are combined in order to highlight specific aspects of life in the GDR. As Kožík pointed out, the insistence on a strict delineation between fantasy and the everyday world is a peculiarly adult preoccupation which young readers were unlikely to comprehend:

Ich will real-phantastisch erzählen, weil Kinder so denken und so fühlen, denn sie sind im Wunderland der Phantasie zu Hause. Erwachsene müssen Kindern nicht immer die Auflage mitliefern, wo die Grenzen zur Realität zu ziehen sind, das wissen Kinder selber

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<sup>47</sup>Eva-Maria Siegel, in *Beiträge...* 75 (1985), p50.

<sup>48</sup>Karin Richter, "Das Wunder ist die Eselsbrücke aus dem Reiche der Idee zur Praxis" (Karl Marx) : Phantastik und Phantastisches in der Kinderliteratur der achtziger Jahre', in *Kinderliteratur-Report* 1/1989, pp9-15.

Through the introduction of the fantasy element into a recognisable, everyday setting, the authors aimed to provoke thought on creativity, sexual stereotyping, education, the family, and, above all, on tolerance. Invariably the authors' message involved a plea for individuality and greater tolerance of those who do not conform to prescribed norms. Young protagonists who fail to conform and feel their personality threatened by society's demands withdraw from their normal environment through fantasy. The central characters almost always return to their normal lives, having come to terms with their differences but often having failed to influence their environment.

The functional, non-utopian form of fantasy used in the GDR was particularly suitable for the portrayal of the learning process which socialisation entails. Problems were not necessarily solved, but the works provoked the reader to consider possible solutions. However, the frequency with which the endings involved the abandonment by the central figures of their initial dreams drew criticism from some children's book specialists, who objected to the implication within these stories that individuals should limit their expectations and accept compromise. Karin Richter, for example, particularly applied this to Pludra's story, with regard to the mother's possible decision to marry her new suitor:

Zu einseitig wird die Erkenntnis der Vergänglichkeit des schönen Scheins und des reizvollen Ideals zu einer Einsicht in eine notwendige Beschränkung des Anspruchs geführt. So wichtig der auch von anderen Kinderbuchautoren gezeigte Abschied von untauglichen und trügerischen Idealen erscheint, so unbefriedigend ist andererseits der Lobpreis des 'kleinen Glücks'.<sup>50</sup>

For Maxi, Jessi and Lilli, the stories do not appear to end happily. None is granted her wishes; each must come to terms with her life, learn to accept her situation and to face up to responsibilities. While the authors show that the protagonist must free herself from unattainable ideals, the acceptance of 'second best' would be an inappropriate ending for a children's book. The author's implications in describing such endings, however, are perhaps more strongly linked with the effect of these on the readers. As was the case with the works dealt with in the previous chapter,

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<sup>49</sup>Regina Scheer, 'Real und Phantastisch : Gespräch mit Christa Kozik', in *Sonntag* 39/1978, (24 September, 1978), p6.

<sup>50</sup>Karin Richter, *Weimarer Beiträge* 11/1986, p1900.

the authors' intention was perhaps that these readers would be motivated by the negative endings to seek an active solution. *Der Engel mit dem goldenen Schnurrbart* has a markedly unhappy ending when Lilli feels forced to concede to society's demands for conformity. Yet the surveys show that the story had a remarkable resonance among its readers. Although it is unclear to what degree adult help was involved in the conclusions reached by the children with regard to the plot, the evident thought about the application of Kožík's message to their own lives shows that young readers were positively moved by the story. As was seen in the previous chapter, many GDR authors wanted to promote in children the ability and the courage to question prevailing attitudes. The surveys carried out into readers' reactions to Kožík's book seem to suggest that fantasy could be a very effective means of conveying this message.



# MAINTAINING POLITICAL TABOOS

## 5. THE FASCIST PAST

In 1978, Christian Emmrich claimed:

Unsere sozialistische Kinder- und Jugendliteratur hat mit allen Tabus gebrochen, die einer realistischen Darstellung des Lebens Barrieren errichten könnten.<sup>1</sup>

It is true that the framework for the debate of children's literature established during the late 1960s, coupled with Honecker's call at the 8th SED Party Conference in 1971 for the removal of taboos from literature within a socialist context, had led to the broaching of many new areas of subject matter in children's literature. However, Emmrich's assumption is based on a deceptively tame image of society, as was exposed by the number of taboos which continued to be broken in subsequent years - in Günter Saalman's *Umberto* (1987) for example.

Emmrich's declaration is representative of the self-delusory rhetoric which often furnished the debate of children's literature within the GDR. It is impossible to speak of having removed all taboos from children's literature. Every society has its own notions of what is acceptable and what is inappropriate for young readers, and the GDR was no exception in this respect. It is significant that Honecker's call for the removal of taboos included the stipulation that the starting point for such literature should be a socialist context. While the voicing of dissatisfaction with various aspects of life within the State - the regulations surrounding work and family life, for example, the education system, and society's attitude towards individuals - became common in the children's literature of the 1970s and 1980s, criticism of a broader political or ideological nature continued to remain taboo. In the specific areas of GDR life, and in particular its history, which continued to be ignored in children's literature, and in those areas which, even after the emergence of a more critical children's literature, continued to be treated in much the same way, a clear expression of support for the overall ideology of the GDR system is implied.

During the 1970s and 1980s, topics such as teenage sex, teenage

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<sup>1</sup>Christian Emmrich, 'Ästhetisches Wesen und künstlerische Spezifik unserer Kinderliteratur', in *Weimarer Beiträge* 5/1978, pp5-37, (p29).

pregnancy, handicap, death, alcoholism, religion and anti-social lifestyles were all considered in children's literature to some extent. However, several critics, among them Karin Richter and Claudia Rouvel, claimed that, though children's literature appeared to deal with many taboo areas, constantly broaching new ground, its treatment of these new topics was largely superficial. Many works limited themselves to describing everyday problems rather than dealing with them on a more serious and in-depth basis. Handicap, for example, was often introduced simply as a literary device intended to heighten a particular conflict. Günter Saalman in his speech 'Das brennende Paulinchen' at the 26th Children's Book Week in Magdeburg in 1988 cited several areas where taboos remained, among them the denied existence of environmental pollution, violent crime, football hooligans, neo-fascists, and of those who had applied to leave the GDR. Such omissions all served to benefit the State. In comparison to the children's literature of the West, the image which GDR children's literature projected of society was very tame and reflected the State's desire to control social dissatisfaction by denying the existence of certain problems.

Censorship is a very grey area, and it is difficult to pinpoint its influence in individual instances. It is clear that certain works were refused by GDR publishing houses (many were subsequently published in the West) because they were perceived to convey political beliefs which were at odds with those of the State. It is also clear that a great deal of editorial pressure was often brought to bear on an author before a book was accepted for publication. Saalman's *Umberto* (1987) underwent six years of editing before it was finally accepted, the author being encouraged to omit various episodes. Benno Pludra, at the 'Roter Elefant' conference in Bremen <sup>2</sup> shortly after the opening of the GDR borders, also spoke of the pressure, particularly on new authors, to include specific expressions of support for the State. Citing the example of his own work *Die Jungen von Zelt 13* (1952), he explained how, as a new author, he had been forced to include expressions of love of the fatherland and of the president, but by the twelfth edition he was able, as an established author, to have this part excluded. Several of the authors present at the conference admitted to being extremely dependent on the role of their editors. Pludra also spoke of the prevalence of self-censorship, authors

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<sup>2</sup>'Darstellung von Geschichte und Zeitgeschichte in der Kinder- und Jugendliteratur der DDR', Roter Elefant, Arbeitskreis Kinder - Bücher - Medien e.V., 24-26 November, 1989, Bremen.

failing to attempt new ground or different styles on the assumption that such works would not be published. He acknowledged that such experiences led to certain patterns of writing. This was presumably one reason behind not only the proliferation of harmonious endings to works of children's fiction (which had muted the impact of the authors' messages to their readers) but also the reinforcement of political ideology to be found in much of the children's literature of the Honecker era. Even where authors appear to encourage a desire for change there is an apparent necessity at times to insist on the immutability of socialism as the aegis under which the proposed changes should take place. Presumably it was felt that, however critical a work was of GDR society, such comments would imply a fundamental support of the overall political ideology on which the GDR state was founded and thus ease the work's publication.

Two areas where this is particularly evident are the continued depiction of representatives of various nationalities in stereotypic terms, as allies or opponents of the GDR State (this shall be discussed in Chapter 6), and, similarly, the continued adherence to a selective version of the events of the fascist past and the Second World War.

The War can be expected to play some role in the children's fiction of any country which was involved. In the GDR it played an exceptionally large role. By 1970, over 100 children's titles had already been published on the defeat of fascism and the origins of the GDR <sup>3</sup>. In 1985, in honour of the fortieth anniversary of the Liberation, the Kinderbuchverlag alone published at least ten new titles dealing with the fascist past. Its dominance as a subject of the GDR's children's literature was perhaps inevitable since, in essence, the circumstances created by the War provided the justification for the State's existence, its alliances and political prejudices.

The War and fascism as subject matter were evidently not considered unsuitable for the young. Taboos can be found in the approach to this subject matter. The version of the War taught to the young concentrated almost exclusively on the persecution of the communists and the Liberation by the Red Army. In 1989, Christel Berger of the Akademie der Künste in Berlin warned of the danger inherent in this. In simplifying the activities of the various factions during the fascist regime, educators had reinforced a somewhat one-sided view of events which could lead to distortions of

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<sup>3</sup>Uwe Frank, 'Kampf gegen Imperialismus, Krieg und Faschismus in der DDR', in *Beiträge...* 15 (1970), pp5-9.

historical phenomena. She cited as an example the surprising number of school pupils who, asked about the past, expressed a belief that their fathers or grandfathers had been members of the Red Army.

As a socialist state which claimed to be based on anti-fascism and was irrevocably allied to the Soviet Union, there was a tendency to imply that there was no connection between the GDR and Hitler's Germany. Little attempt appeared to be made to come to terms with complicity in the events of the past. Instead, family advice books urged parents to promote pride in the past by stressing the importance of the achievements of the communist opposition to Hitler's regime:

Sie sollten den Kindern bewußt machen, daß viele der angenehmen Seiten des Lebens in unserer Gesellschaft von der älteren Generation unter Opfern erkämpft und verwirklicht wurden. <sup>4</sup>

Habe Ehrfurcht vor dem, was deine Vorfahren geschaffen und geleistet haben! Mache deine Kinder mit großen Momenten der Geschichte unseres Volkes bekannt! <sup>5</sup>

In contrast, West Germany was commonly depicted as the heir of the fascist past. While accounts of the Second World War concentrated on the Liberation by the Soviet Army, plaques on ruined buildings in Berlin proclaimed 'durch anglo-amerikanische Bombenangriffe zerstört', implying that these had been the true enemies. Thus the events of the War were used to reinforce the political orientation of the GDR.

Throughout the State's existence, this official version of the events of the fascist past was to define the nature of portrayals of the period in children's literature. The Soviet Military Administration in Germany after the War ordered the removal of all National Socialist and militaristic literature and in its place encouraged the development of a literature which would inspire its readers to support the new authorities and their beliefs. Thus works of the 1950s and early 1960s which dealt to any extent with the War tended to concentrate on its aftermath and the origins of the emerging state rather than on the events of the War itself. Gorki had advocated that, in order to secure a stable future, the young should be protected from the horrors of the past:

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<sup>4</sup>Roland Rudolf, *Mit Beispiel und Liebe : Ratschläge für die Erziehung in der Familie* (Leipzig, 1981), p23.

<sup>5</sup>Helmut Stolz, *Wie soll dein Kind sein?* (Berlin, 1988), p39.



Je weniger sie die Scheußlichkeiten der Vergangenheit und Gegenwart in sich aufnehmen, um so gesünder, lichter und vernünftiger wird die Zukunft sein, und um so eher wird sie anbrechen. <sup>6</sup>

It is understandable that, in the early years, when the memories of the War were so immediate in the minds of the young, authors should have followed this approach. However, when, during the mid-1960s, it was felt that sufficient time had passed for these events to be seen as history and dealt with in a more detached and rational manner than had been possible earlier, children's books continued to follow the pattern established by these early works. The harsher realities of the War itself were largely ignored. There was a marked tendency instead to focus on the heroic activities of the anti-fascist resistance and the Liberation by the Soviets, while totally avoiding others such as the Western allies' opposition to the fascists and the persecution of the Jews. As late as 1987, the view given on the latter question by Reimar Dänhardt, senior editor with the Kinderbuchverlag was that, while the communists could be depicted as rebelling against fascism, there was no such positive lesson to be shown in the fate of the Jews. This appears to affirm the view that the War often tended to be used as a superficial foil for adventure stories - the Jews could not be shown to resist and therefore did not constitute exciting reading. The past was thus used by children's authors in such a way as to reinforce specific concepts of political alliance.

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, authors began to review the way in which the wartime past was presented through children's literature. There was, for example, an increase in the publication of biographies and memoirs of those who had lived through the fascist period, and of documentations such as Helga Gottschlich's *Als die Faschisten an die Macht kamen* (1982). Of prime importance was the period of time which had elapsed since the War. Events and early ideals could be viewed a little more dispassionately. There was increasingly a feeling among authors that it was no longer sufficient to concentrate on the more heroic events of the past and expect young readers to be grateful for the sacrifices made by the previous generations. Benno Pludra warned authors:

Die Kinder bekommen frühzeitig zu hören, daß sie ein Leben haben, wie es frühere Generationen erträumten, für das gekämpft und gestorben worden ist, ein Leben, frei von Hunger und Krieg. Niemand wird bezweifeln, wie wichtig es ist, den Kindern dies immer

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<sup>6</sup>Maxim Gorki, *Über Kinder und Kinderliteratur* (Berlin, 1968), p45.



wieder nahezubringen, in ihr Herz zu geben, bewußtzumachen, woher wir gekommen sind. Doch wir sollten bei alldem wissen: Was Väter und Großväter aufgebaut haben, unter vielen Opfern, in unermüdlicher Arbeit, das sehen die Kinder - und man möchte sagen: zum Glück - als Kategorie ihres Alltags. Gründe zur Dankbarkeit sehen sie nicht, gleich gar nicht, wenn sie gehäuft davon hören oder wenn sie in Sprüchen davon erfahren. Ihre Träume gehen eigene Wege, und Glück empfinden sie immer mal anders, als wir es gerade erwarten. In den Schoß gelegt bekommen sie eigentlich nichts; denn jeder Tag, den sie beginnen, fordert vollen Einsatz, auch von den Kleinsten schon.<sup>7</sup>

Constantly reasserting the need for gratitude could destroy any interest the young may have had in the period. Many felt that the time distance was now too great for the young to fully appreciate the direct links between the defeat of fascism and their own situation. Children's writers began to seek different, perhaps less openly didactic means of familiarising the young with the past. One method particularly favoured by authors during the 1970s and 1980s was to depict a modern-day setting and to introduce figures from the grandparent generation, who recounted past events to the young central characters. Initially at least, the grandfather characters emerged as committed and exemplary anti-fascists. In this way the young could be made aware of the individual's experience of the past and shown to discover for themselves the significance of present-day situations which they had taken for granted. Thus authors were able to convey a sense of national and personal heritage.

While a more critical approach on the part of authors can be found in depictions of contemporary GDR society during the 1970s and 1980s, the GDR's somewhat unique official version of the fascist period and its aftermath still dominated the portrayals to be found in children's literature. Upon examination two aspects are immediately apparent, as the works discussed below demonstrate. Firstly, as in the children's books of the 1950s and 1960s, stories continue to stress a disassociation between the GDR State and the Third Reich and to suggest that a continuation of fascism can be found in West Germany. Secondly, during the 1980s, certain developments can be seen in the characterisation of the grandfather figures. In contrast to earlier images, it was admitted that not all GDR citizens who had lived through that period had been involved in the heroic activities of the Resistance. Some were even shown to have been members of the Nazi Party. However, mitigating circumstances and their subsequent

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<sup>7</sup>Benno Pludra, 'Wo die eine Geschichte endet, beginnt die nächste ...', in *Almanach zur Kinderliteratur der DDR : Bücher und Bilder* (Hamburg, 1989), pp67-68, (pp67-68).

exemplary commitment to the GDR were invariably used to excuse and minimise their behaviour. Children's literature continued to imply that the older generation of GDR citizens had not been involved in the more inhuman aspects of the wartime past.

### Disassociation and continuity

When examining works dealing with the fascist past, the obvious time lapse and the necessity to introduce characters from the older generation to recall for the young the events of the past are often all that allow the reader to distinguish between works of the 1950s and those of the 1970s. In the latter, the recollections of the older characters are used to emphasise the continuity between wartime resistance and the GDR State.

One typical example of this overtly political use of children's literature can be seen in Horst Beseler's *Auf dem Fluge nach Havanna* (1973). Beseler is one of the older generation of authors who experienced the War years, and his works reflect this fact. The book was designated by the publishers for the over-9s and falls clearly into the category which Pludra criticised: those works which contain an implicit expectation of gratitude for the achievements of the past. The story is set very distinctly in present-day Berlin and recounts two hours of a summer afternoon as a group of children unexpectedly discover that an elderly neighbour to whom they had hitherto paid little attention was, in fact, a hero of the Resistance. The work does not attempt to portray the past but to emphasise the links between past and present, stressing in particular the consequences for international relations.

The young characters, a group of Young Pioneers, are used throughout as receptacles for the author's opinions. They are propelled smoothly and unconvincingly from initial indifference to the fascist period - they refer to their responsibility for the upkeep of the local war memorial as 'albernes Blumengießen'<sup>8</sup> - to admiration for the achievements of the communists. Prompted by the unexpected arrival of Borrisow from the Soviet Union and the search which he initiates for Herr Engelke - the children's elderly neighbour and, as they discover,

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<sup>8</sup>Horst Beseler, *Auf dem Fluge nach Havanna* (Berlin, 1973), p12.

Borrisow's wartime comrade with whom he escaped from prison - the young characters reconsider the significance of the memorial to the Resistance fighters and their own relationship to it. They are even shown to reproach themselves for not taking a far greater interest in the past:

Gefragt haben? Was hätte man von jemand erfragen sollen, der einem tagtäglich begegnete?

Daß Herr Engelke seit vielen Jahrzehnten Genosse war? Daß er im Faschismus gegen die Nazis gekämpft hatte? Wußten wir ja. Aber warum hatten wir uns damit begnügt und nicht mehr wissen wollen? <sup>9</sup>

Throughout, the author uses the story to convey certain political points arising from past events. When Borrisow arrives, for example, Herr Engelke is not at home and the children organise a search for him. When he is finally found, shortly before Borrisow has to leave, he is recognised by means of the symbol of his trade - his green plumber's tool kit:

Nun jedoch, angesichts dieses schlichten Werkzeugkastens, aus dem Rohrzangengriffe ragten, begann ich zu verstehen, daß es für Herrn Engelke stets das gleiche Leben gewesen war: Immer hatte er helfen wollen. Im Kampf gegen die Faschisten damals ebenso wie heute, da er schon Invalide und Rentner war und trotzdem überall mit seinem Werkzeug einsprang. Deshalb wohl auch nahm er nichts für seine Reparaturen. Lediglich einen Spendenbeitrag ließ er von den Leuten überweisen, wo er gerade baute. An die Volkssolidarität oder für Vietnam. <sup>10</sup>

This short description of Herr Engelke's lifestyle is intended to represent certain ideals of behaviour and to link past commitment to anti-fascism to present commitment to international socialism, although Beseler's decision to attribute a desire to fight fascism to a helpful disposition is indicative of the simplistic nature of the story. The friendship between Borrisow and Herr Engelke further emphasises links between the GDR and the Soviet Union and their common heritage. The fact that Herr Engelke is a plumber and Borrisow arrives in a chauffeur-driven car on his way to catch a flight to Cuba on diplomatic business serves to illustrate the classless bond between the two, and, for any reader with whom this message has failed to register, the author shows how the meeting provokes one of the young characters to ponder on the wider significance of the afternoon's events:

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p51-52.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., pp59-60.

Glucke Hampel ließ den Schraubenschlüssel sinken und erklärte stockend: "Werd euch mal sagen, was richtig doll ist. Nämlich: Wie die alle zusammengehören - Herr Engelke und der Sowjetnik und die ebenso, wo er da unten hin will mit dem Düsenbrummer von Schönefeld. In Havanna. Zusammengehören, so ganz einfach und selbstverständlich, als wär's gar nichts Besonderes. Sozusagen von - innen. Als ob einer von uns zu 'nem anderen in die Querstraße will und von dem zu noch 'nem Kumpel, wieder 'n paar Häuserblocks weiter. Alle sind in einer Klasse, bloß wohnen tun sie in lauter verschiedenen Ecken!" <sup>11</sup>

The story contains no direct portrayal of the events of the War itself, and no attempt to convey the horrors of war. The author concentrates solely on the heroism of the Resistance fighters and the unreserved admiration of the young for this. Beseler uses the recollection of the events of the past to highlight present political relations. Despite its jaded plot and its simplistic approach, in 1987 the book was published in its thirteenth edition, presumably above all because of its appeal to those involved in the political education of the young.

Although the majority of authors attempted to approach the issue with a little more subtlety during the 1970s and 1980s, a similar stance on the events of fascism continued throughout the GDR's existence. Works which attempted to present a different version of the past were not published. One story for teenagers, for example, which included the wartime rape of the central character's mother by a Soviet soldier, was refused by GDR publishing houses and later published in West Germany.

Various methods were used to convey a disassociation of the GDR from fascism. One of the most favoured was the introduction of elderly characters who represented the various Eastern European countries which had suffered under fascism, and who, after recounting the events of the past, appear to indicate that they see no connection between the perpetrator of their suffering and the GDR. It is inevitable that these are East European and not representatives of the Western victims of fascism, since very few Westerners are to be encountered in the children's literature of the GDR. However, coupled with the official depiction of West Germany as the heir of fascism, these stories, denying complicity in the more horrific events of the War, both implied that the perpetrators of fascism were now to be found in the West and served to emphasise international solidarity and the GDR's socialist origins.

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p66.



To stress the idea of disassociation from the fascist past, those characters who are shown to choose to remember the War years in terms other than those of heroism and gratitude are often criticised in the texts for doing so. In Hans-Ulrich Lüdemann's *Ich - dann eine Weile nichts* (1976), the author conveys this message through the portrayal of an elderly Soviet man, Sergej Pawlowitsch Iwanow, whom Bärbel meets on the train in the Soviet Union. He studied German but swore an oath never to speak it again after an incident in Berlin at the end of the War when he was working on the trials of Wehrmacht officers and on the public reeducation programme. In Russian he recounts to Bärbel how his friend Sascha had been killed by a fervent group of youngsters with guns after the two Russians had attempted to communicate with them in German. Bärbel's reaction is that his attitude is unjust towards those now who cannot be held responsible for the past:

Ich schließe die Augen. Mal nachdenken: Sergej Pawlowitschs Schwur trifft die eigenen Freunde. Rita zum Beispiel. Sie möchte sich mit ihm unterhalten, über sein Land. Aber Sergej Pawlowitsch tut so, als verstehe er nichts. Kann Rita aber was dafür, daß es diesen Tag im Jahre fünfundvierzig gegeben hat? An dem Sascha fiel? Kann sie nicht. Also ist der Schwur gegenüber Rita ungerecht. Wenn Sergej Pawlowitsch nicht mit einem Faschisten Deutsch spricht, und deutsche Faschisten gibt es noch immer, das kapiert ich ...<sup>12</sup>

The implication is that Iwanow's oath is unjust towards those Germans in the East, since those German fascists who still exist cannot be found in the GDR. Having dismissed the idea of continuity between the Third Reich and the GDR, the author proceeds to concentrate on links between the GDR and the Soviet Union and on the achievements of those involved in the Resistance. Towards the end of the story Bärbel and her class visit a concentration camp, but the narrative avoids any notion of continuity between the past perpetrators of crimes against humanity and the GDR and concentrates instead on the legacy of those whose heroic deeds are remembered there. As in the majority of stories, the concentration camp is equated with the imprisonment and murder of those who resisted fascism. There is no mention of the Jews or similar victims, the narrative speaks only of those whose sacrifice made possible the creation of the new State:

Das ist ein heiliger Boden. Weil solche wie der Unbekannte hier gestorben sind. Und man ihm frische Nelken bringt. Zum

<sup>12</sup>Hans-Ulrich Lüdemann, *Ich - dann eine Weile nichts* (Berlin, 1976), pp201-202.



Gedenken. Weil er seinen Teil dazu beigetragen hat, daß es dieses Heute gibt.<sup>13</sup>

Polish characters were particularly favoured by authors to introduce the topic of the War to children's stories during this period. Often the Polish character has no apparent function within the story other than this. In Marga Tschirner's *Die neue Oma aus Budapest* (1977), which shall be discussed in further detail in the following chapter on the use of characters representing various nationalities to convey specific political messages, the story revolves around the multi-national workforce at a chemical plant. Into this setting the author introduces the grandmothers of two of the young central characters, one from Poland and the other from the GDR. The Polish grandmother tells the German grandmother about her experiences of the War and of the fear she had felt about visiting Germany. The issue is dealt with summarily and without reference to the child characters. The German grandmother reflects briefly on the fact that her husband had gone to Poland with the army, and admits to herself that she had thought that the past was now forgotten. Conveniently for the story's implications, he is now dead and the friendship of the two old women is thus uncomplicated. The Polish grandmother, having been told that these are 'andere Deutsche'<sup>14</sup> and experienced life there for herself, feels at home in the GDR:

Nun ja, diese DDR, dieses Land ist nicht schlecht ... Es läßt sich leben dort ... Sie spürt keine schlimme Unruhe mehr in sich.<sup>15</sup>

Other Polish characters in the story who had suffered under fascism, such as Jerzy, a partisan during the War, and Tante Ewa, who had experienced the Warsaw Ghetto, express similar initial misgivings about living in the GDR and are soon shown to overcome these. The implication is again that those who fought fascism and those who suffered under it see no continuity between Hitler's Germany and the GDR.

In contrast, those Polish characters who, like the Soviet in Lüdemann's story, remembered the suffering of the War and associated this with Germans as a whole, not differentiating between East and West, were portrayed in a very critical light in children's literature. It was not

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid., pp301-302.

<sup>14</sup>Marga Tschirner, *Die neue Oma aus Budapest* (Berlin, 1977), p72.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p83.

only the older, ideologically more conventional generation of authors who adhered to this motif. Gunter Preuß, for example, in his children's story *Komm über die Brücke* (1979), specifically attempts to encourage German-Polish friendship, and stresses how this can be hindered by memories of the War. The plot centres on the friendship of two young boys, one from each side of the river which forms the border between the GDR and Poland. Their friendship is jeopardised by the grandparents of the Polish boy, Witek, and their memories of the son they had lost during the War.

Few children's stories dealing with aspects of the War were published for the under-10s, since it was felt that children below this age did not yet have the necessary knowledge of the period to comprehend the subject matter. Preuß' book is written for the over-7s, therefore certain aspects have to be explained in relatively simple terms. Thus, for example, when Witek's mother attempts to describe the effects of the War to her son, she does so in terms of a terrible man-eating dragon which the Germans had brought to their country. However, the behaviour of Witek's grandparents in forbidding their grandson to meet his German friend is presented in a highly one-sided manner. Preuß initially shows the grandparents to be unwilling to talk, therefore the ban seems unreasonable. When his grandfather does speak to Witek about the matter, his explanation is brief:

"Tadeusz war groß und stark wie ein Bär. Und er spielte auf der Harmonika wie niemand weit und breit. Dann kam der Krieg. Tadeusz war jung, fast noch ein Kind. Die Deutschen haben uns den Krieg gebracht. Sie haben Tadeusz getötet. Ich habe das nicht vergessen." <sup>16</sup>

Readers of seven cannot be expected to sympathise with this argument, and indeed this appears intentional on the part of the author. The subsequent warnings given to the grandson show the grandparents in a particularly menacing light:

"Halte dich von dem deutschen Jungen weg." Mahnendes, Drohendes liegt in seiner Stimme. <sup>17</sup>

Witek's grandparents are constantly portrayed as belonging to another era. Their belief in God seems alien to their grandson, as do their

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<sup>16</sup>Gunter Preuß, *Komm über die Brücke* (Berlin, 1979), pp45-46.

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*, p46.

superstitions and their mistrust of modern medicine. The story appears to suggest that their memories of the War too belong to this strange and disappearing way of life.

Preuß resolves Witek's dilemma simply when the boy and his parents move to a new flat in town, away from the grandparents' influence.

Die neue Wohnung empfängt Witek freundlich. Er geht durch alle Zimmer. "Vergiß", sagt sie zu ihm. "Hier soll es dir gefallen." <sup>18</sup>

Witek is now free to renew his friendship with the German boy. The way in which Preuß presents the issue to young readers almost seems to imply that the older Poles are at fault for not being able to forget the past.

Many of the authors who depicted the connections between past and present not only linked the GDR very closely to the Resistance and disassociated the State from the Third Reich, but often stressed the notion of continuity between the Third Reich and West Germany. Brigitte Birnbaum's *Das Siebentagebuch* (1984), provides a typical example. In the story, for the over-12s, Inez relates, in diary form, her experiences during a week at a pioneer camp, preparing for a trip to the Soviet Union. The camp takes place at a large castle, and Birnbaum uses this fact to introduce the notion of the connections between past and present. Inez' account is dominated by her discoveries about her own family's recent past. It emerges that one of those in charge at the camp is an aunt, of whose existence the girl was hitherto unaware. The rift in her family had come about as a direct result of the War, and the ensuing account describes Inez' dilemma in deciding where she stands in relation to both parties.

Inez learns from Heide, her aunt, on what she describes in her diary as "der schwärzeste Tag meines Lebens" <sup>19</sup> that the family feud resulted from the fact that her grandfather was killed in 1945 by Soviet partisans, and that her grandmother and her father refused to recognise that this man was no hero and would have been punished after the War:

Nach Vatis Erzählen war Opa in Rußland gefallen. Als Held. <sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p62.

<sup>19</sup>Brigitte Birnbaum, *Das Siebentagebuch* (Berlin, 1984), p55.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p62.

Birnbaum simplifies Inez' dilemma for the readers in that the father appears only indirectly through Inez' and Heide's memories and through strong political stereotyping. Heide, as a leader of the Pioneers, who studied in Moscow after becoming isolated from her family, represents the political ideal. The father, by contrast, appears to see the world solely in terms of status and possessions. He is shown to be opposed to Inez' imminent trip to the Soviet Union, except in terms of the prestige it will bring him. He is materialistic and, it is constantly emphasised, very much influenced by the West and admiring of his relatives in Cologne and Hamburg.

Linking connections with West Germany with the political stances of the past, Birnbaum stresses the relationship between fascism and the materialistic ideology of the West. This is made particularly clear through the figure of the father, whose political involvement, like that of the 'Mitläufer' of the past, is purely opportunistic:

Vati war auch in der FDJ, nicht aus Überzeugung. Seine Ruhe wollte er haben. <sup>21</sup>

In order to enable her central character to recognise her family's shortcomings and to be convinced by a different way of thinking within the space of the seven-day holiday, Birnbaum is compelled to paint the father in exaggerated terms. He never appears, but is seen only through the eyes of his daughter and his sister. He apparently has no redeeming features. The character might have represented a broaching of new ground in GDR children's literature, had not Birnbaum decided to link it so closely to the influence of West Germany. In doing so, she diminishes his guilt, maintaining the political taboos which dictated that the West was the true heir of the fascist past.

Similar trends can be seen in Jürgen Jankofsky's *Ein Montag im Oktober*. Published in 1985 for the over-10s, the story deals with the discovery of the unheroic activities of the young central character's grandfather as a prison guard at the local labour camp during the War. The granddaughter, Katrin, discovers these when undertaking a school project into local wartime activities. Rather than attempting to concentrate on this taboo area, however, Jankofsky chooses to use the story to convey political oppositions. This even extends to the depiction of the

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<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p58.



two prison camps to be found in the area during the War. One camp houses the Eastern Europeans under terrible conditions. Alongside this camp can be found another with Western prisoners whose experiences, set amid descriptions of their Soviet counterparts' deprivation, appear almost pleasurable:

Dort waren Italiener, Holländer, Dänen und Franzosen, aber unter weitaus besseren Bedingungen untergebracht. Sie erhielten zuweilen Sonderzuteilungen, wie Konserven, Tabak, Wein. Ja, diesen Fremdarbeitern wurde der geringe Arbeitslohn auch ausbezahlt. Sogar Ausgang wurde ihnen ab und zu genehmigt.<sup>22</sup>

While these circumstances may well have been authentic in individual cases, taken in the context in which they are presented, they imply that some political significance can be seen in the leniency of the fascist regime towards the Western prisoners.

Moreover, the reader learns towards the end of the story that the man responsible for the shooting of a Russian prisoner at the camp, the identity of whom is a source of much speculation during the story, has apparently been harboured by the West. Thus the idea of political continuity is reinforced:

“Der Blonde hatte sich rechtzeitig in den Westen abgesetzt”, sagte der Großvater. “Soviel ich weiß, ist er irgendwo an der Ruhr aufgetaucht. Das ganze Belastungsmaterial wurde dem zuständigen Gericht übergeben. Aber was daraus geworden ist ...”<sup>23</sup>

At the end of the story, a voice on the radio, condemning the Americans' activities in Vietnam ensures that the notion of the continuation of inhumanity is seen to apply not only to West Germany but to the West in general. In adhering to political conventions of this kind throughout the story, the author reduces the concept of the War guilt of a present-day GDR citizen to the point of insignificance, thus reinforcing the taboo he initially appeared to be attempting to break. This was the common pattern of GDR children's literature of the 1980s which attempted to deal with the wartime guilt of individual citizens.

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<sup>22</sup>Jürgen Jankofsky, *Ein Montag im Oktober* (Berlin, 1985), p38.

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*, pp117-118.



## Exoneration from War guilt

At first sight, Jankofsky's *Ein Montag im Oktober* with its character of the exemplary grandfather with a dubious wartime past appears to mark an important breakthrough, since it demonstrates a willingness to present a more balanced view of the past, less compliant with official versions of the events of the War. However, the work is typical of several stories which dealt with this issue during the 1980s and without exception failed to carry through their apparent intentions to their natural conclusion. While the grandfather figures through whom the young central characters are shown to learn of the past are often shown to have been involved in questionable activities or even to have been members of the Nazi Party, all are exonerated by the authors from any significant blame, both on account of their exemplary behaviour within the GDR since, and through the severe diminishing of the extent of their past activities. This was particularly recognised by critics with regard to Jankofsky's book. Karin Richter wrote in her review of "einem vollkommenen Mißglücken poetischer Absichten" <sup>24</sup>. While recognising that the book had attempted to break new ground, critics condemned the way in which Jankofsky had provided a smooth and forced ending to his story.

The story focuses on 12-year-old Katrin, who has lived with her grandfather since her parents died in an accident ten years earlier, and how their close relationship is threatened by Katrin's discoveries about the past. In a discussion with critics, published in the *Beiträge...*, Jankofsky emphasised that as a young author, born in 1953, he did not feel entitled to portray the details of life in the fascist regime, but that his intention was to show young readers that history consisted of more than list of facts in school books, and to demonstrate how the events of the past could continue to affect the young today:

Erstaunlich ist, daß der Stoff dieses Buches anfangs für Erwachsene gedacht war. Nur, so eine Art Positionsfindung eines Dreißigjährigen ist kein relevantes Thema für Kinder. Während der ersten Schreibversuche merkte ich, daß die eigentliche Problematik, den Faschismus in seiner Gesamtheit zu verstehen, für Kinder außerordentlich wichtig wäre, und ich wollte mit ihnen darüber ins

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<sup>24</sup>Karin Richter, 'Soziale Erkundungen in der Kinder- und Jugendliteratur', in *DDR-Literatur '87 im Gespräch*, edited by Siegfried Rönisch (Berlin and Weimar, 1988), pp76-90, (p89).

Jankofsky successfully uses the character of Herr Gröger, the teacher in charge of the school project, to demonstrate the difficulties in conveying to the young the conditions faced in the past. Several scenes depict the teacher attempting to explain to the children the circumstances prevalent in those days and the decisions which many were forced to make. He warns against complacency about events under the fascist regime:

Während die Bilder reihum gingen, sagte Herr Gröger, er glaube, daß heute so mancher, nicht nur Doreen, denke, man wisse eh schon alles über die Nazizeit, das sei vorbei, ein für allemal, gehe uns nichts mehr an, sei langweilig. Er meine aber, daß noch vieles zu entdecken und zu verstehen sei ... Die Menschen, die damals lebten, müsse man begreifen lernen, ihre Haltungen. Nur so könne man verstehen, wie all das möglich war, und könne vielleicht bewußter mithelfen, daß nicht noch Schlimmeres möglich wird. <sup>26</sup>

The central difficulty inherent in Jankofsky's story lies in the fact that the young protagonists are shown, perhaps like the readers, to hold very strong views about the period which they have received through the education system. The pupils, for example, are shown to believe that everyone who did not actively oppose the system was a fascist. Up to a point, Jankofsky's story provides a valuable demonstration of how a lack of communication about the past and an over-schematic view of past events can prove severely detrimental to relations between the generations. Initially, the aim appears to be to combat the rigid perceptions held by the young through the introduction of an apparently sympathetic character with a dubious past. However, towards the end of the story, the author proceeds to undermine this intention by excusing the grandfather's involvement and reducing his guilt to such a negligible level that the motive ceases to have meaning. The reader is told that the grandfather had initially been excused from military service because of his work, but two years after the start of the War was presented with the ultimatum - to join the War or to serve as a guard at the prison camp. In order to stay at home with his wife and apparently unaware of what it will entail, he agrees to the latter. The grandfather admits to an initial admiration for one of the committed Nazis at the site ("Solcher Fanatismus war offenbar ansteckend

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<sup>25</sup>Steffen Peltsch, 'Gespräch mit Miriam Margraf, Reinhard Griebner und Jürgen Jankofsky', in *Beiträge...* 78 (1986), pp5-18, (p8).

<sup>26</sup>*Ein Montag im Oktober*, p26.

...”<sup>27</sup>). This character, however, the man responsible for the shooting of the Russian prisoner, is strongly contrasted with that of the grandfather. The latter is shown to have treated the prisoners well, and although present when the Soviet prisoner was arbitrarily shot, he was not directly involved. A contrived explanation is even provided for his subsequent silence about the incident. The impression therefore given is that any guilt the grandfather feels about his past activities is limited solely to his suspicion that he could possibly have prevented this single incident if he had acted quickly enough.

An official exoneration from his wartime activities also appears to be granted. It is mentioned towards the end of the story that the grandfather, at the end of the War, had been captured by the Americans and, as a prisoner, made to work in a Belgian mine. His escape from here is recounted without recrimination, which seems to imply that the imprisonment was unjustified. After returning to his home town, an enquiry held by the Soviet authorities into his time as a guard finds his activities so insignificant that his time spent as a prisoner of the Americans is considered to constitute sufficient punishment.

In addition to minimising the involvement of Katrin's grandfather in the less heroic aspects of the War, the author continually stresses his status as a respected and valued member of the present-day community. Here too Jankofsky appears to suggest that the character's past activities may be excused, since his knowledge of the original lay-out of the area's brown coal sites, where the labour camps had been located, is much in demand and proves invaluable to the present-day excavators. The fact that he has been made an 'Aktivist' four times over also emphasises his impeccable political commitment. Ultimately, the author evades the issue of the War guilt of the GDR's elderly citizens, concentrating instead on mitigating circumstances and a subsequent contribution to the development of the GDR State.

This pattern is repeated throughout the works of the 1980s which dealt with this subject matter. Horst Beseler's *Der lange Schatten* (1987), depicts a close friendship between the central character Harry and his uncle Linne, a man who acts as a substitute grandfather for the teenage boy and introduces the young characters, and thus the readers, to the

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<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p115.

concept of the personal experience of wartime history. The work was written for older readers - the 13 and over age-group - thus enabling the author to rely more heavily on the audience's prior knowledge of the period.

Beseler establishes at the outset a pattern of relationship between the individual and the events of the past. Through the figure of Linne, whose official name is Wilhelm Friedrich Paul Lienhardt Aust, the author links past and present, intimating, as Harry ponders on the historical heritage implied by the character's name, that the connections are not solely to be seen in the more recent past:

Verzweifelt fragte er sich, warum nun noch über diese blöde Namenskette gestritten werden mußte, in die knallpreußische Beziehungen hineinzuweigten: ein Kaiser, ein flöteblasender und kanonenschießender König, ein schnauzbärtiger Feldmarschall jüngeren Datums, besagter Paul. Außerdem ein verblichener Kabinettsminister, dessen Rufname familiär auf den griffigen Rest "Linne" zurückgestutzt worden war.

Für all das konnte der Onkel nichts. <sup>28</sup>

The suggestion here of the apparent absence of responsibility of the uncle for the past forms a central issue of the story.

Similarly to the grandfather Jankofsky portrays, Linne is drawn as a very sympathetic, exemplary and respected character, whose political stance appears flawless. At one point in the story, visitors from the Ministry bring him a decoration for his services, telling Harry:

"An diesem Onkel, Jugendfreund, nimm dir ein Beispiel. Zuverlässigkeit, Fleiß und Vertrauen ..." <sup>29</sup>

The relationship between Harry and Linne is close and the boy feels understood by him as by no one else. When his teacher asks about the friendship, Harry does not hesitate in his praise of his uncle:

"... gibt es bestimmte Gründe, daß du so an diesem Onkel hängst?"  
"Weil er nicht sofort alles besser wissen will. Und weil er immer ganz offen ist und nichts verschweigt. Alleinlassen würde Linne einen nie. Mit ihm konnte ich immer über alles reden." <sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup>Horst Beseler, *Der lange Schatten* (Berlin, 1987), p28.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p106.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., p70.



His views prove ironic in the light of the uncomfortable facts which begin to emerge about Linne after he suffers a collapse while walking with Harry in Alexanderplatz. Confused while recovering in hospital, Linne begins to speak of his wartime experiences. His subsequent secrecy fuels the boy's interest and leads the reader to want to learn more. The issue is thus presented to the reader in the form of an intriguing mystery.

Eventually it is revealed that Linne feels responsible for his friend Detlev Cassbaum's death. In France during the War, when Detlev decided to join the French partisans, Linne had fought with him and hindered him until it was too late. Detlev attempted to leave, but was shot by his own side and Linne, after firing resumed, felt forced to abandon him to die alone.

Having established this central character's guilt, however, Beseler then detracts from its significance. Linne's 'crime' is minimised above all by stressing his good intentions in attempting to preserve a friend's life.

Rulo Melchert's review of the book published in the *Beiträge...* claimed:

Entschuldigt wird nichts.

Aber darüber reden anhand dieser Geschichte von Beseler ist durchaus fruchtbar für unser Geschichtsverständnis.<sup>31</sup>

Excuses, however, are offered, and the book does little to revise conventional perceptions of the War. There is no attempt to investigate the wider implications of Linne's political beliefs at that time. Linne's conscience appears to be troubled above all by the fact that he had left his friend to die alone, and the issue of guilt is restricted to this single incident. Even this sense of guilt is shown to be alleviated during the course of the story when it is revealed that Detlev had a son, born several months after the incident in France. Linne's harsh memories of his friend's death are somehow appeased by the knowledge that he has lived on through a family.

This somewhat unsatisfactory ending is typical of the portrayals of wartime history to be found in the children's literature of the 1970s and particularly the 1980s. In children's books in which the effects of the War were not the central theme but formed a significant sub-plot, the view given of the War guilt of individuals was inevitably equally simplistic.

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<sup>31</sup>Rulo Melchert, 'Horst Beseler: "Der lange Schatten", Illustrationen von Gerhard Lahr; Der Kinderbuchverlag Berlin 1988', in *Beiträge...* 92 (1989), pp64-66, (p66).



Where the taboos were apparently so strongly maintained, it would be unusual to find new ground broken in the secondary strand of the story.

Thus in Günter Görlich's *Der unbekannte Großvater* (1984), for the over-10s, for example, when young Markus is somewhat surprised to learn that his grandfather was a prisoner-of-war in Siberia and had not, as the boy's education had led him to expect, run away to join the Soviets, the old man's strong links with the Soviet Union since that time are used to exonerate his past behaviour. In addition, to appease any young reader who may have realised the implications of the grandfather's membership of an army which was fighting against the communists, the author includes a scene at a fairground shooting booth, where the grandfather spends a lot of money but constantly misses the target, because, it is stated, he never could hit anything.

The book in which the issue is perhaps most successfully dealt with, in that it provokes thought on the events of the past without providing simple solutions, is Jürgen Leskien's *Georg* (1984). Although the issue is again confined to a sub-plot, it is perhaps one of the most uncompromising portrayals conveying the effects of the wartime past on the present. As has already been seen, the story, for the over-12s, deals with a boy's move from a children's home to live with a family in Berlin. The plot centres around the boy's attempts to find a place for himself, both in the family and in the community at large. A sub-plot dealing with the past helps to set the boy's self-discovery in the wider context of the State's political orientation.

Following the common pattern, Leskien uses the motif of a close friendship between a boy and a grandfather figure to demonstrate how revelations about the past can encroach upon the present. Jonischkan, the old man who has a workshop in the courtyard outside Georg's new home, is much admired by the boy and becomes a great friend. The old man is shown to the readers in a very sympathetic light. He is constantly depicted as a caring person who is very fond of Georg. However, information about his past places strains on their friendship.

Leskien uses the figure to emphasise the links which can be found on a personal level between past and present. When Jonischkan begins to speak about the War years, for example, he is prompted by Georg's discovery in the workshop of a large lock which has been sawn through.

The setting of Jonischkan's memories in specific and recognisable areas of Berlin and the links between objects in the workshop, such as saws or footstools, and the events of the past bring the account to life not only for Georg but also for the reader.

The book presents the reader with images of War which are avoided in the sanitised versions of the past to be found in the majority of children's books and, the author indicates, in the version taught to the young at school. Georg has learned about the War at school, but until meeting Jonischkan, his knowledge has centred around dry facts and accounts of heroism. Jonischkan attempts to explain to the boy the deprivation the people of Berlin had faced, the conditions in which the unemployed had lived and the blind faith which Hitler had been able to generate by providing employment. He describes the stench of the dead bodies and the rats which fed on them, and tells of his task at the end of the War looking for and burying these bodies. By showing Georg's deliberations on these accounts, the author is able to voice some criticism of the way in which the young are taught about the past:

Davon stand wenig in den Schulbüchern, halbe Sätze nur, denn es war vom Aufbau die Rede und von der wichtigen politischen Arbeit der Genossen. Kaum etwas vom Krieg nach dem Krieg und nichts von Leuten, die den Ratten die Leichen ihrer erstickten Wohnungsnachbarn entrissen.

Warum aber gehörte gerade Jonischkan einem Leichensuchtrupp an? Warum gerade er?

Warum war Jonischkan kein Aktivist der ersten Stunde gewesen? <sup>32</sup>

The breakdown in their relationship comes about when Georg discovers an old photograph in which Jonischkan is wearing the Nazi Party badge. Again the author uses the incident to demonstrate the preconceived notions prevalent among the young with regard to the fascist period:

"Sie? Sie waren? Was, Sie?"

"Ein Nazi, willst du sagen, das meinst du doch, nicht?"

Georg heulte auf. "Sie, warum denn Sie, Sie waren doch Arbeiter!"<sup>33</sup>

The education system within the GDR presented the fascist period to pupils in terms of class allegiance, concentrating on communist opposition to the fascists and instilling the notion of a continuation of fascism in the

<sup>32</sup>Jürgen Leskien, *Georg* (Berlin, 1984), p110.

<sup>33</sup>*Ibid.*, p185.

materialism of the West. To a child conditioned to think in such simplified political terms, the notion of a member of the working class joining the Nazi Party would be incomprehensible. In portraying this situation, Leskien forces the readers to question preconceived notions of history. No simple solution is provided. While the author creates understanding for both Georg and Jonischkan, the rift between the two is by no means resolved. Both devastated by the breach in their friendship, they are not shown to meet again during the course of the story. Indeed, even the opening passage of the book in which the narrator describes meeting Georg a year later and discussing his life with the Eisenhuts makes no reference to Jonischkan.

Through the introduction of the Polish character, Jan, the author similarly questions the view of the past which was taught to the young in the GDR. Again a Polish character who appears to have been introduced solely to provide access to the subject matter of the War, Jan teaches Georg about the suffering of the victims of fascism. He speaks of the three years he spent as a child in a nearby concentration camp, where his mother was killed. The narrative describes a visit to the site of the concentration camp, but, in contrast to other accounts which lead the reader to focus on the heroism of those who had died, this episode is used to highlight the horrors entailed. As Georg contemplates the glass case full of the shoes of the children who had taken them off, thinking that they were being taken to the showers, and listens to Jan's accounts of the difficulties in removing from clothes the specks of human ash from the crematorium, he is shown to realise for the first time the magnitude of what occurred there.

In contrast to the Polish characters to be found in the majority of GDR children's books, who are used to indicate a lack of continuity between fascism and the GDR, the character of Jan is used to emphasise that some continuity must be recognised. He insists to Georg that it was not only the Nazis who knew about the concentration camps:

“Das ganze Land hat es gewußt. Nicht nur die Mitglieder der Nazipartei. Alle. Alle, die heute Großväter und Großmütter sind.”<sup>34</sup>

Through Jan's reaction to Jonischkan, the author makes it particularly clear that past allegiances will not be forgotten simply because of subsequent behaviour:

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<sup>34</sup>Ibid., p157.

“Ich kenne Jan.” Der Alte hatte sich gefaßt und sprach mit ruhiger, eindringlicher Stimme. “Vor Jahren, als er das erste Mal bei deinen Eltern war, stellte er sich auf den Hof neben meine Werkbank und sah beim Schlüsselfeilen zu. Er stand lange bei mir und sagte, gute Arbeit. Und dann wohl noch, schon immer, was? Ja, habe ich gesagt, schon immer. Auch bei Hitler, fragte er weiter. Ja, auch bei Hitler, habe ich leichthin geantwortet. Er spuckte aus und ging weg zu euch nach oben. Das war dreißig Jahre nach dem Krieg. Ich dachte damals, nun sollte bald alles vergessen sein. An diesem Nachmittag, ich hatte noch ein wenig mit deiner Mutter geredet, begriff ich, daß es ein Vergessen für mich nicht geben kann, das wäre zu einfach.” <sup>35</sup>

Certain compromises are made by the author in conveying the concept of the War guilt of a GDR citizen. Jonischkan’s involvement in the Nazi Party, for example, appears to have been passive rather than active, and largely due to pressure from his late wife. In addition, it is made clear through the portrayal of Jonischkan’s reflections on the merits of socialism, that his conversion at the end of the War was entirely sincere. In many works this aspect is lacking as these beliefs are taken for granted from the outset. Towards the end of the story Georg is shown to consider Jonischkan’s contributions to society since his conversion, and the suggestion seems to be that his past behaviour can be excused in the light of this:

Hatte Jonischkan nicht Leichen ausgegraben? Für die neuen Häuser jahrelang Steine gehuckt? Hatte er nicht mit jeder Hücke ein Stück abgetragen vom Berg der Schuld? War er nicht ein anderer geworden, in Alfreds Brigade, in Warmbrots Nachbarschaft? <sup>36</sup>

His absolute conversion to the socialist cause at the end of the War suggests to the reader that he has now atoned for his past mistakes. However, Leskien goes further than most authors towards conveying to young readers some idea of the conditions under which people lived during the fascist regime and the choices which they faced. He also implies some criticism of the way in which the history of the War was taught in schools. By using the character of Georg as a recipient of Jan and Jonischkan’s accounts of the past, the author is able to force young readers to reconsider their schematic, received view of the War and its aftermath.

The inclusion of episodes from the fascist past in children’s

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<sup>35</sup>Ibid., p185-186.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., pp187-188.



literature constitutes a difficult area because of the views entrenched in the minds of the young via the education system and because readers need sufficient factual knowledge of the period to relate to the events recorded. Comparing *Georg*, *Ein Montag im Oktober* and *Der lange Schatten*, Christa Jauch, who specialised in the study of fascism in literature for both children and adults, felt that in all three cases the young readers' knowledge of the period would not be sufficient for them to understand the stories without adult assistance:

Die drei Erzählungen stellen beachtliche Anforderungen an die Rezipienten, werden doch historische Zusammenhänge aus der Zeit von 1933-1945 nicht gestaltet, sondern ihre Kenntnis wird im wesentlichen vorausgesetzt. Prä- und Metakommunikation, vor allem unterstützt und gelenkt durch Lehrer und Bibliothekare, erscheinen daher bei der Lektüre dieser Titel unbedingt angeraten.<sup>37</sup>

The majority of the GDR children's books which deal with the fascist period demonstrate the way in which the political orientation of the GDR could be highlighted through the illustration of the events of the past, and the predominance of works dealing with the period demonstrated the importance placed on creating a sense of national identity, explaining present-day situations as a result of past decisions and assuring an ideal of personal heritage for the young. Now that Unification has taken place, different political authorities and a different education system will inevitably result in a different presentation of the past. The West German view of the War is likely to prove dominant. Before Unification, many GDR children's books were also published in West Germany. These, however, included none of those works which dealt with the wartime period. In view of this, and in the light of the political circumstances of Unification, few GDR stories dealing with the fascist past are likely to survive in the united Germany.

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<sup>37</sup>Christa Jauch, 'Tendenzen bei der Darstellung der Auseinandersetzung mit den Faschismus in Werken der DDR-Prosa für Erwachsene und Kinder. Diskussionsbeitrag in Thesenform', in *Kinderliteratur-Report* 3/89, pp9-10, (p10).



## 6. NATIONAL STEREOTYPES

With the opening of the GDR borders in November, 1989 and the subsequent unification of Germany eleven months later, GDR citizens were subject to a whole new set of political allegiances. Young GDR readers, accustomed to a particular conception of the world, now found that many of their books contained political images which were no longer acceptable. In January, 1990 the DDR-Zentrum für Kinderliteratur (at that time still the GDR's children's book information and administration centre) issued a statement expressing concern at this and demanding a review of the children's literature available:

Sich am Wendepunkt zu befinden, bedeutet zuallererst auch kritisch zurückzublicken. In den Bibliotheken, Schulen, Betreuungseinrichtungen und Kinderzimmern befindet sich ein großer Fundus an Kinder- und Jugendliteratur. Dieser muß vorurteilsfrei gesichtet, das Wertvolle und das Mangelhafte müssen gekennzeichnet werden. Einen Ansatz sehen wir dort, wo Feindbilder und zweifelhaftes Heldentum beschworen werden.<sup>1</sup>

One of the chief barriers to the survival of much GDR children's literature in the new Germany is its use of national stereotyping to convey specific political messages. Through praising or anathematising various nationalities, the works offered children a picture of their own state and its position in world alliances. The international outlook promoted had several blindspots. A map of the world based solely on knowledge gained from GDR children's literature would depict the GDR being threatened on the west by West Germany and the United States while allied on the eastern side of the divide to the Soviet Union, Poland, Cuba, very occasionally Hungary, Bulgaria and Czechoslovakia, various parts of Africa and South America, and the stateless native Americans.

Given the GDR's history, this orientation in itself is not surprising. Article 6 §2 of the Constitution stated that the GDR was irreversibly allied to the Soviet Union, and §27 of the Youth Law urged young people to appropriate the art and literature of the Soviet Union and of the other socialist allies as their own. Inevitably, in the early years GDR children's literature reflected the official view of the State's position within world alliances. The Soviet orientation was a direct result of the circumstances at the end of the War. After the War, to help establish the new socialist order,

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<sup>1</sup>'Lassen wir unsere Kinder nicht zwischen die Zeilen kommen! Ein Ruf des DDR-Zentrums für Kinderliteratur', Berlin, January, 1990.

many of the first books published by GDR publishing houses were translations of Soviet classics - Gaidar's *Timur und sein Trupp* (1950) for example. The trend continued. During its forty year existence, the output of the Kinderbuchverlag, the GDR's largest children's book publisher, contained translations from a variety of over 20 languages. 80% of all translations originated in Eastern Block countries, some 50% from the Russian language alone.

Equally, negative images of the West reflected the State's official political views. Article 18 of the Constitution emphasised the State's opposition to the 'imperialistische Unkultur', which in turn led to solidarity with the victims of oppression overseas, the importance of which is stressed in the *Programm der Sozialistischen Einheitspartei Deutschlands*:

Die befreiten und um ihre Befreiung kämpfenden Völker sind eine mächtige antiimperialistische und revolutionäre Kraft unserer Zeit. Deshalb fördert die Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands aktiv die Festigung des engen Bündnisses der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik mit den Völkern Asiens, Afrikas und Lateinamerikas, die gegen Imperialismus und Neokolonialismus kämpfen. Sie entwickelt zu ihnen freundschaftliche und beiderseits vorteilhafte Beziehungen. Sie fördert die enge Zusammenarbeit und Solidarität mit ihnen.<sup>2</sup>

The official ideology was reinforced elsewhere within society, for example through the education system, where political terminology and the concept of political alliance were introduced at a very early age. The family advice books also stressed the importance of political education at home. The use of the term 'enemy' was rife. Helmut Stolz in *Wie soll dein Kind sein?*, for example, urged parents:

Lehre deine Kinder, die Freunde unseres Landes zu schätzen und seine Feinde zu erkennen! <sup>3</sup>

Gerhard Neuner, in *Die zweite Geburt*, recommended that parents encourage their children to watch 'Der schwarze Kanal', Karl Eduard von Schnitzler's series in which he attempted to demonstrate the chicanery of the Western media:

Wenn man zeigt, wie der Gegner manipulieren will, so ist das aktive

<sup>2</sup>*Programm der Sozialistischen Einheitspartei Deutschlands* (Berlin, 1988), p87.

<sup>3</sup>Helmut Stolz, *Wie soll dein Kind sein?* (Berlin, 1988), p39.

*Immunisierung.* Ist erst einmal der Blick dafür geschärft, welche Informationen der Gegner bringt und welche er verschweigt, was er entstellt und wie er das tut, welche Lügen und welche Halbwahrheiten er verbreitet, welche Methoden und Verfahren er dabei anwendet, dann haben gegnerische Medien einen großen Teil ihrer Wirkung verloren. <sup>4</sup>

Children's literature throughout the GDR's existence reflected such attitudes. In the early years this was inevitable. In 1958 author Max Zimmering pleaded for books which showed the connection between oppression overseas and the growth of socialism in the GDR, books which demonstrated international solidarity:

Diese Bücher bedürfen der Ergänzung durch eine Literatur, die dem aufwachsenden Menschen den Zusammenhang zwischen der Ausrottung des indianischen Volkes, der Knechtung des Afrikaners, der kapitalistischen Ausbeutung und unseren Bemühungen um den Aufbau des Sozialismus erkennbar macht. <sup>5</sup>

Yet as late as 1970 author Fred Rodrian placed international solidarity and proletarian internationalism foremost in his 'Katalog des für die Gegenwartsliteratur zu Bewältigenden' <sup>6</sup>, stressing the importance both of this and of instilling in the young the desire to defend their country:

Die politisch bewußte und emotionale Vorbereitung, Festigung und Vertiefung der Verteidigungsbereitschaft ist noch nicht in ausreichendem Maße Gegenstand unserer Kinderliteratur geworden. Das ist ganz wichtig! <sup>7</sup>

Authors such as Gerhard Holtz-Baumert frequently expressed the opinion that literature had a duty to promote in the young a rejection of capitalist values and the will to defend socialism, and continued to insist on the importance of using children's literature to encourage the young to reject what were seen as the ideals of the West. In 1978 he stated :

Ich möchte einen gesunden, antikapitalistischen, antiimperialistischen Haß aktivieren. Manche Leute werfen uns diesen Haß vor, gerade die, die uns stets gehaßt haben und den Sozialismus von der Landkarte tilgen wollten und wollen. Sie

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<sup>4</sup>Gerhard Neuner *Die zweite Geburt : Über Erziehung im Alltag* (Leipzig, Jena, Berlin, 1978), p100.

<sup>5</sup>Quoted in *Das Kinderbuch : Gedanken und Ansichten* edited by Renate Gollmitz (Berlin, 1983), p128.

<sup>6</sup>Fred Rodrian, 'Beginn - Bilanz - Aufgaben', in *Beiträge...* 14 (1970), pp23-35.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, p32.

würden die Kinder gern weichlich und willenlos haben. Nein, ich bin für die unerschütterliche Gewißheit, nie etwas gemein zu haben mit der Sache des Klassenfeindes.<sup>8</sup>

Although it could be argued that both Rodrian and Holtz-Baumert were representative of an older generation of authors who tended to adhere to a didactic approach to children's literature, there was little deviation from this pattern among the younger writers. This was one of the few areas where the changes in children's literature during the 1970s and 1980s had little effect on traditional ways of dealing with a subject.

In contrast to the critical portrayals to be found of GDR society in its children's literature of the 1970s and 1980s, those of representatives of other nationalities remained true to the official ideology. The characterisation perhaps became slightly more subtle than in the early portrayals, and some previously unexamined topics were broached - an increasing number of child characters appeared, for example, whose parents had left them behind when they fled to the West. In view of the growing international isolation of the GDR, there were perhaps fewer portrayals during this period of revolutionary struggles abroad, although many of their superficial images were adopted in the few works which depicted representatives of these countries living in the GDR. However, the picture, on the whole, remained largely the same: citizens from the East were friendly and demonstrated solidarity, those from the West represented a materialistic influence and threatened the GDR's ideals.

The GDR was a very isolated state, particularly towards the end of its existence, when disapproval of Gorbachev's perestroika programme distanced it even from its eastern allies. There were only six countries to which the state approved ordinary citizens' visits, and of those only Czechoslovakia could be visited without a visa. While it is true that most GDR citizens had access to a different view of the world via West German television, few had first-hand experience of life abroad and as such were subject to the views propagated in their own publications, especially where these were aimed at young readers.

The works dealt with below, many of which have already been considered in the previous chapters, have been selected to represent the various ways in which GDR children's literature during the 1970s and 1980s

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<sup>8</sup>Quoted in *Das Kinderbuch : Gedanken und Ansichten* , p205.



characterised the allies from the East, the enemies from the West and the State's friends overseas. Few works dealt exclusively with these areas. This type of characterisation was, as a rule, incidental to each story but, viewed in the context of the GDR's children's literature as a whole, the message was very forceful.

### Representatives of the GDR's allies in the East

Since the opening of the inner-German borders, several GDR authors have spoken out in criticism of the over-sentimental and uncritical portrayal of Soviet citizens in GDR children's fiction. Examples were surprisingly few, but those to be found were very blatant. Early Soviet figures had been connected with the heroic activities of revolution and resistance. Heroism continued to be a major trait, even in later depictions of everyday life. The Soviet soldier Igor Alexandrewitsch, visiting Magdeburg for a medical examination in Gotthold Gloger's *Kathrins Donnerstag* (1970), for example, a book for early readers, aged 7 and over, saves the life of young Kathrin when she falls 22 metres out of the window after being left alone in the flat while her mother goes shopping. The girl is completely unharmed and Igor, having risked his life, has only slight injuries. The damage is in fact mainly to his uniform. The text refers to the soldier's 'ans Fantastische grenzende Geistesgegenwart' <sup>9</sup> and emphasises his apparent superhuman strength:

"Trotzdem ist es unmöglich", sagte der Feuerwehrmann. "Sehn Sie mal, gute Frau, durch jeden Meter Fall vervielfacht sich die Geschwindigkeit. Kein Mensch kann solchen herabsausenden Körper mit bloßen Armen auffangen, es sei denn, er läßt sich zu Musquetschen. Wenn wir von der Feuerwehr mit sechs Männern das Sprungtuch halten, dann ist es möglich, aus fünfzehn oder sechzehn Meter Höhe jemand lebend aufzufangen. Bedenken Sie: Für sechs Männer!" <sup>10</sup>

Towards the end of the story, the author, not content with the characterisation of national representatives, stresses the wider ramifications of the incident. When Kathrin's parents hurry to the station to express their gratitude to the Soviet soldier, a greater international significance is implied:

<sup>9</sup>Gotthold Gloger, *Kathrins Donnerstag* (Berlin, 1970), p24.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p37.



Jetzt wurde es still im Kleinbahnabteil. Alle Augen richteten sich auf den Offizier. Igor spürte deutlich, wie gerade diese Stille von der Wichtigkeit seiner Tat sprach. Es war, als wenn das Sowjetland dem Volk der DDR einen großen Dienst erwiesen hatte.<sup>11</sup>

The Soviet character thus becomes a representative of the bond between the GDR and the Soviet Union.

In the later 1970s and 1980s, the Soviet characters to be found in the GDR's children's literature were relatively few. Those encountered, often members of the military, were invariably secondary characters and subsequently given little individuality. Portrayals were perhaps more subtle than those to be found in earlier works. The Soviets were no longer characterised purely by heroism. However, authors continued to concentrate on other admirable and sympathetic qualities, principally the love of children. Hans-Ulrich Lüdemann's *Ich - dann eine Weile nichts* (1976) provides several typical examples. The central character, Bärbel, strikes up an instant rapport with members of the Soviet military stationed in the GDR when they stop her in the street to ask directions, and she initiates a partnership between her school and the group. They are instantly recognised as reliable and friendly:

Dufte Kumpels. Man müßte sie mal einladen in die Schule.<sup>12</sup>

Since the Soviets are shown to speak little German while the children are all too keen to practise the Russian they are learning at school, this popularity does not appear especially unusual. However, the pattern continues throughout the book. Ironically, at one point Lüdemann attempts to highlight the fact that generalisations about different nationalities cannot be made. Bärbel recalls the words of Soja, a neighbour from Leningrad:

Soja hat mal zu mir gesagt: Manche in der DDR denken, daß wir Sowjetbürger so eine Art Ausnahme sind. Wie in der DDR gibt es auch bei uns böse und gute Menschen.<sup>13</sup>

These less positive examples of Soviet characters did not appear in the GDR's children's literature, and particularly not in Lüdemann's book.

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p51.

<sup>12</sup>Hans-Ulrich Lüdemann, *Ich - dann eine Weile nichts* (Berlin, 1976), p70.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p170.

Bärbel's trip to the Soviet Union is characterised by further favourable examples. During the trip, the girl recognises her own state's economic superiority. However, where human qualities are concerned, the Soviets she meets on her arrival are shown to excel. The portrayal emphasises a strong sense of community and the parents' attitude towards the young is described as 'irgendwie liebevoller'.<sup>14</sup>

The author adds a political dimension to his portrayal of the Soviet adults. They appear to represent not only an interpersonal but also a political ideal:

Anatoli. ... Kommt nach seinem Vater. Stark und zuverlässig. Ein Kommunist, wie ich ihn mir vorstelle. Ja, wenn ich an *den* Kommunisten denke, sehe ich immer Anatolis Vater vor mir. Dem traue ich einfach nichts Schlechtes zu. Wer die Sonne liebt und Kinder, das muß ein Kommunist sein. In diesem Land.<sup>15</sup>

Examining individual examples, the Soviet characters to be found in the GDR's children's literature of the 1970s and 1980s were portrayed in a very idealised and uncritical light, but these characters were in the main secondary and in fact so few that little overall impression of positive prejudice can be discerned.

Examples of most other Eastern European nationalities were equally few, the one notable exception being the Poles, who, as has been seen, were invariably used as a means of introducing the subject of the Second World War. In contrast to the widespread prejudice against the Poles within the GDR, the Poles in children's fiction were largely viewed with some sympathy as people who had suffered during the fascist period. However, this characterisation had a purely political function. The older characters related their experiences of the War and their consequent feelings towards the Germans and then, having become acquainted with GDR citizens, emphasised the notion that there was no continuity between Hitler's Germany and the GDR. The political significance given to the portrayal of various nationalities in children's literature can be seen in the fact that Preuß' *Komm über die Brücke* (1979), which promotes the idea of friendship between a German and a Pole, ceased to be available once Solidarity's popularity in Poland had placed strains on GDR-Polish relations.

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p212.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., pp224-225.

Given Czechoslovakia's status as the only state which could be visited without a visa, its avoidance in children's literature is perhaps surprising. It could be argued that this was partly due to the language barrier, but elsewhere this appeared to present little problem to fictional characters. In Preuß' story of German-Polish friendship Roland and Witek speak to each other in their own languages aided by signals and by dictionaries and apparently encounter little difficulty in making themselves understood. Marga Tschirner in *Die neue Oma aus Budapest* (1977) took this idea to extremes, seeming to imply that internationalism was so binding a force that it knew no linguistic bounds. The story is based among the multinational workforce at the chemical works at Winda in the GDR, which processes oil from the Soviet Union and exports the product to Czechoslovakia. The setting itself therefore immediately evokes the concept of internationalism. The story tells how the central character, Mathias, returns from holiday to discover that his mother has married Ernő, a Hungarian who also works at the plant. The boy's life is enriched as he begins to mix with their other international colleagues and their children. One of the least credible aspects of the story is the ease with which the language barrier is overcome. While the children initially attempt to speak to each other in Russian ("Na eben. Russisch! Russisch ist doch international!" <sup>16</sup>), they appear to be able to use their own languages to communicate with each other without problems. Marika, from Hungary, and Jadwiga, from Poland, are shown to have no difficulties in understanding each other, which, given the unrelated nature of Hungarian and Polish, seems unlikely. The German and Polish grandparents, using dictionaries, communicate in remarkably complicated sentences:

Die Babcia blättert schweigend im Wörterbuch. "Bei uns", sagt sie dann langsam, "hat die Babcia keine Zeit, ins Kaffeehaus zu gehen. Schickt sich auch nicht, sagen die Leute." <sup>17</sup>

Similarly, Mathias, without Ernő's help and aided only by a dictionary, appears to show a singular gift for word order and grammar when he composes a letter in Hungarian to his new grandmother in Budapest:

Verzweifelt blättert er wieder im Wörterbuch. Einen ungarischen Satz muß er wenigstens noch zusammenkriegen. Einen einzigen.

<sup>16</sup>Marga Tschirner, *Die neue Oma aus Budapest* (Berlin, 1977), p47.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., pp70-71.

Schließlich - nach mühsamem Suchen hat er noch hinzugesetzt: Hiába, nagyon nehéz a magyar! Leider, Ungarisch ist sehr schwer!<sup>18</sup>

By the end of the story, Mathias is learning Hungarian, Polish and Czech, has been invited by his new penfriend to visit Czechoslovakia, is about to visit Poland, and is hoping that his family will move to Budapest in two years' time.

At times the story reads like a treatise on the spirit of internationalism. When an accident occurs at the plant, for example, one of the Poles explains to Mathias the comradeship among the international colleagues:

“Der Brand ist so gut wie gelöscht. Aber alle sind noch dort, aufräumen, auch deine Mutter und Ernő. Ja, als sie von dem Brand hörten, kamen sie alle, Ungarn, Polen, Jugoslawen, Rumänen - alle, die hier arbeiten, ganz gleich, an welchem Platz.”<sup>19</sup>

However, while the nationalities working at the site are twice in the book listed as including Yugoslavs and Romanians, these representatives of differing political systems are interestingly never directly encountered in the story. The colleagues portrayed and their children whom Mathias meets at school are Polish and Hungarian, and the correspondence between their political beliefs and those of the GDR is stressed throughout. Ernő, for example, who had thought little about politics while in Budapest, had joined the Party after arriving in the GDR and after six years is elected Party Secretary. It is emphasised that, despite coming from different countries, the Poles and Hungarians share the Germans' political ideals:

Ernő kommt später. Er hat noch Parteiversammlung.

“Ist er denn in der SED?” fragt Mathias erstaunt.

“Er ist in der Ungarischen Sozialistischen Arbeiterpartei.” Mutter streift ihre Sandaletten von den Füßen und bewegt die Zehen. “Ernő ist Kommunist wie ich und wie Herr Szymanski.”

“Finde ich eigentlich gut”, sagt Mathias.<sup>20</sup>

While the sentiments expressed in promoting international relations are praiseworthy and the book breaks new ground in its portrayal of life in a multinational community, the author detracts from her own

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<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p115.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., pp152-153.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p30.

achievements above all through the simplistic, superficial and politically strident nature of the portrayal.

### Non-European allies

While portrayals of representatives of Eastern European nationalities were, on the whole, superficial but relatively few during the 1970s and 1980s, those representatives of states further afield with which the GDR sympathised were even more elusive. During the 1950s and early 1960s, many GDR children's stories had been set against the background of revolution and socialist uprising in various countries throughout the world, principally in South America and in Africa. With the growing international isolation of the GDR in later years, the world shown in its children's literature shrank considerably and works of this nature were notably few. However well-intentioned the early works had been in expressing support for oppressed peoples struggling for independence, their images of life in these countries were often superficial and extremely patronising. Götz R. Richter's *Kimani*, for example, published in the 'Kleiner Trompeter' series for the over-8s, an account of a young African boy growing up in Kenya, begins:

Kimani's Haut ist glatt und braun, so glänzend und braun wie die gebrannten Kaffeebohnen. Nur die Innenflächen seiner Hände und seiner Fußsohlen schimmern hell wie eure. Kimani ist ein Afrikaner, und er lebt in Kenia. Die weißen Zähne leuchten in dem dunklen Gesicht, wenn Kimani lacht.<sup>21</sup>

This was written in 1964. Later works were not perhaps addressed quite so explicitly to a white reader, but the implication remained in many of the images and descriptions. Christa Kozik's description of her heroine in *Ein Schneemann für Afrika*, published in 1987 for the same age group, for example, is very similar to that of Kimani:

Asina ist sieben Jahre alt. Sie hat braune Haut wie Milkschokolade, Augen wie dunkelglänzende Malzbonbons und Zähne wie kleine Perlmuscheln.

Das lustigste an Asina sind ihre Zöpfe.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>Götz R. Richter, *Kimani* (Berlin, 1964), p5.

<sup>22</sup>Christa Kozik, *Ein Schneemann für Afrika* (Berlin, 1987), p7.



Asina is constantly referred to in these terms. She is 'die schokoladenbraune Asina' <sup>23</sup> and 'dieses braunhäutige Wesen' <sup>24</sup>. The story, centres around the GDR sailor Karli's promise to bring Asina something which cannot be found in Africa and the subsequent transportation of Kasimir the snowman in the ship's refrigerator. While Kožik does not use Africa solely as a backdrop for the portrayal of revolutionary struggles, the narrative is equally misleading, concentrating exclusively on Africa as representative of the exotic - the air is filled with the scent of tropical plants and exotic spices, elephants carry heavy loads, a snake charmer provides entertainment, at the harbour the country's banana exports are loaded onto the foreign ships, and Asina plays with her pet monkey, Bingo. The pictures of African life in Asina's native Cocatuttibana are highly naive and derivative. The author appears to have selected images of life from various parts of Africa, and indeed the Caribbean, and presented them as an amalgamated African state, a state where, apparently, 'African' is spoken:

Die deutsche Sprache spricht Kasimir auch perfekt. Denn Schneemänner, so sagt Kasimir, sprechen alle Sprachen der Welt. Nur heiser spricht er, als wäre er erkältet.  
"Kannst du auch Afrikanisch?" fragt Karli.  
"Schascha", antwortet Kasimir und nickt. <sup>25</sup>

The African children are portrayed stereotypically as simple, happy and somewhat ignorant. The sailor from the GDR explains much to them:

Natürlich fragen die Kinder, was denn Schnee ist. Karli erklärt, daß der Schnee im Winter in Europa vom Himmel fällt, daß man dann friert und Schuhe aus Pelz und Mützen und Handschuhe aus Pelz anziehen muß. Die afrikanischen Kinder lachen darüber sehr. Schuhe aus Pelz, wie ulkig. Das können sie sich nicht vorstellen. <sup>26</sup>

It can be argued that this is, to some extent, a fantasy story, but, like Kožik's other stories of this nature, it purports to portray a real setting. By constantly stating that this is Africa, Kožik provides very young readers with a dangerously simplistic and romanticised image of that continent.

This imagery is particularly disturbing since the young had little

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<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p52.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p52.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., pp31-32.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p50.

access to an alternative image of ethnic groups. In stories depicting life within the GDR, minority groups were rarely mentioned. The occasional portrayals to be found of African students in Berlin were very stereotyped, involving much singing, dancing and rolling of eyes. In Arwed Bouvier's *Mein allerbesten Zwillingsbruder* (1983), the Africans whom the central character encounters in the Palast der Republik in Berlin are typified only by their appearance and their extrovert, cheerful nature:

Einer der Afrikaner schüttelte mir besonders lange die Hand, er sagte etwas dazu auf afrikanisch, und er zeigte mit der freien Hand auf die Halle vom Palast der Republik und dann auf mich und wieder auf die Halle. Die anderen standen im Kreis um uns herum und klatschten in die Hände, und ich weiß nicht wie, fingen sie an zu singen; sie sangen etwas, das sich nach einem alten afrikanischen Volkslied anhörte. <sup>27</sup>

Again, in the boy's eyes, the Africans appear to speak 'African', and there is no attempt by the author to redress this misconception, nor to elaborate on the very naive descriptions:

Die Afrikaner lachten mich an, und sie begannen, mir einer nach dem anderen die Hand zu schütteln. Sie hatten ungeheuer weiße Zähne in ihren braunen Gesichtern <sup>28</sup>

Günter Saalman's *Umberto* (1987), despite the numerous taboos it broke in other areas, portrays characters with very similar traits to those Bouvier describes. Octaviano, the student from Pa-isch in Africa and father of Umberto's sister Bianca, is less anonymous than Bouvier's Africans. Although still a minor figure, he is characterised as a man who has instilled in Umberto certain ideas of right and wrong, when the boy was neglected by all others. However, Saalman's descriptions of Octaviano are highly clichéd:

Octavianos Kinnbart kräuselt sich unternehmungslustig wie immer, seine Augen hinter der Nickelbrille rollen gefährlich. <sup>29</sup>

Umberto's visit to the student hall where Octaviano and his friends live contains equally stereotyped images. The Africans are typified above all by their singing and dancing:

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<sup>27</sup>Arwed Bouvier, *Mein allerbesten Zwillingsbruder* (Berlin, 1983), p118.

<sup>28</sup>*Ibid.*, p117.

<sup>29</sup>Günter Saalman, *Umberto* (1987), p45.

Apfelsinenduft sprüht Umberto in die Nase, jemand hält ihm eine Cola hin. Eine Weinflasche kreist, Bademantelgürtel werden um die Stirnen geschlungen, in den Frisuren stecken plötzlich rote und blaue Kugelschreiber als Kopfschmuck. Ein lustiger, plattfüßiger Tanz beginnt, jemand schüttelt eine Rassel aus zwei winzigen Schildkrötenpanzern, an der eine lederne Quaste im Rhythmus hin und her schwingt.<sup>30</sup>

As in the portrayals to be found in the 1950s and 1960s, the figure of the African is strongly linked to the concept of revolution : Octaviano leaves when he feels obliged to return to his homeland to join the fighting there. While such behaviour and political commitment is credible, the inclusion of this cliché in the story, particularly in the light of the absence of alternative images, serves only to reaffirm received notions of how such characters behave.

Unlike Bouvier, whose Africans experience heartfelt welcome at the Palast der Republik, Saalman indicates in *Umberto* the existence within the GDR of racial prejudice. The extent of the prejudice, however, is severely minimised within the story as its expression is restricted to Umberto's grandmother, whose superstitions and eccentric habits imply that she is not typical.

Octavianos Miene verzieht sich zu einem schmerzhaften Lächeln. Er weiß so gut wie Umberto, daß die alte Frau ihn nie verkräftet hat. Heimlich lebt sie in dem Glauben, daß er sich von Menschenfleisch ernährt. Dabei ist er alles andere als ein Menschenfresser.<sup>31</sup>

The depth of racial prejudice within the GDR is highlighted more clearly in Maria Seidemann's *Die honiggelbe Kutsche* (1985). It proved an exception among GDR children's books in that it shows, through the character of Ben, that not all GDR citizens were white. Ben is the result of an affair his mother had with an African student, and the story relates the prejudice he and his mother encounter on the street and at his mother's work as a school teacher. This is one of the few books where the presence of ethnic groups in the GDR is even mentioned. Theo lists to Ben the variety of nationalities to be found in Berlin:

Theo dreht sich rasch um und greift nach ihm, hält ihn fest. "Hast du gedacht, ich lache dich aus, Mann? Weil du braun bist? Hast du mir deswegen den ganzen Schwindel erzählt von Afrika? In Berlin laufen massenhaft afrikanische Studenten rum und Vietnamesen

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<sup>30</sup>Ibid., p46.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., p46.

Apart from the few superficial figures of African students, these groups do not appear as characters in their own right in the GDR's children's literature.

Seidemann makes clear her awareness of the stereotypic images of Africans provided to the young, when Ben tells his new friend Theo about his life and his father. Never having been to Africa, and eager to compensate for the prejudice he experiences, he attempts to make his life sound particularly interesting by resorting to received ideas about African life. His story, later exposed as fiction, ranges from the tribal existence of his great-grandfather, harvesting wild bananas in the jungle to the sacrificial killing of his grandfather and eventually, of course, to his father's activities as a revolutionary fighter against Portuguese colonialism.

Seidemann attempts to show that Ben is like any other GDR boy in outlook. Highlighting the racial prejudice he faces, the author provides a message which surprised many young readers, as surveys carried out in libraries in Berlin showed:

‘Ich glaubte, bis ich dieses Buch las, nicht, daß farbige Kinder, die in unserem Land leben, mit solchen Problemen konfrontiert werden. Es ist schon bedenklich, wenn man liest, mit welcher Abneigung die Leute in der Stadt Ben begegnen. Diese Leute verhalten sich spießbürgerlich und ungerecht.’ (Mädchen, 8. Klasse)<sup>33</sup>

However, while creating sympathy for Ben and expressing condemnation of the prejudice he faces, Seidemann adds a political dimension to her portrayal by intimating that, whatever the boy's problems in the GDR, he is lucky not to live in a country such as the United States where his problems would be far greater:

Oft hat Benjamins Mutter mit ihm darüber gesprochen, ruhig und vernünftig, und immer wieder hat er versucht, sich einfach nichts mehr draus zu machen. Seine Haut ist dunkelbraun, sein Haar kraus

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<sup>32</sup>Maria Seidemann, *Die honiggelbe Kutsche* (Berlin, 1985), p33.

<sup>33</sup>Inge Huth, ‘Kinder über Kinderbücher - Eine Umfrage zu Maria Seidemanns “Die honiggelbe Kutsche”’, bearbeitet von Inge Huth unter Verwendung der Auswertung von Deike Runge (Stadtbezirksbibliothek Berlin-Treptow) und Maria Sparka (Stadtbezirksbibliothek Berlin-Mitte)’, in *Kinderliteratur-Report* 2/1989, pp47-53, (p52).



und schwarz - na und? Er lebt schließlich nicht in Süd-Carolina, USA. Er geht zehn Jahre zur Schule wie jedes andere Kind hierzulande, und wenn er sich ein bißchen aufrafft, kann er sogar sein Abitur machen und studieren. Er wohnt in keinem Slum, sondern in einer Wohnung mit Bad und Balkon, er hat sein eigenes Zimmer, ein Fahrrad, eine neue Staffelei und eine Menge Bücher.<sup>34</sup>

Having highlighted one form of stereotyping through the story, Seidemann resorts to another political stereotype, enforcing a negative image of an enemy state, and thus detracting from the seriousness of the problems which those such as Ben encountered in the GDR. Negative imagery of this kind was a common feature of GDR children's literature of the 1970s and 1980s.

### The West and its influence

Naturally, in GDR children's literature the West was represented above all by West Germany. As has already been discussed in the previous chapter, West Germany was depicted as the heir of the fascist past. Not only was the country shown to be corrupt, however, but its individual citizens were depicted not as characters in their own right but solely as representatives of the West German state and therefore condemned. In the GDR's children's literature West German relatives constituted a particularly undesirable influence. These relatives very rarely appeared, but tended to be presented as a distant and corrupting materialistic influence arising in the form of gifts. One of the few direct portrayals, and indeed one of the most amusing, can be found among the stories in Gerhard Holtz-Baumert's 1962 collection *Alfons Zitterbacke hat wieder Ärger*. Here Tante Paulette visits from the West, full of pity for her poor relations and bearing inappropriate presents:

“Na, wie geht es euch? Immer noch schlecht, wie?” sagte Tante Paulette lächelnd und packte ein großes Paket Margarine aus. “Das werdet ihr bestimmt gebrauchen können, das gibt's ja hier nicht.” Papa sagte ganz ruhig: “Liebe Tante Paulette, du bist uns ein sehr willkommener Gast, aber du zeigst immer wieder, daß du von der Welt keine Ahnung hast.”<sup>35</sup>

There is symbolic revenge for the aunt's gift of American chewing

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<sup>34</sup>Die honiggelbe Kutsche, pp11-12.

<sup>35</sup>Gerhard Holtz-Baumert, *Alfons Zitterbacke hat wieder Ärger* (Berlin, 1962), p28.



gum for Alfons when he accidentally manages to stick her to her chair with it:

Papa hat sich mit Tante Paulette wieder gezankt. Er hat gesagt: "Das geschieht dir recht mit dem Ami-Dreck. So möchten die Imperialisten alle Leute anleimen." <sup>36</sup>

The effect here is intentionally comic, but Holtz-Baumert, a strong advocate of the need for a specifically socialist children's literature, was very serious about the political objectives of his children's books, particularly about the rejection of Western materialism:

Ich kämpfe für den unbedingten Willen, dieses Land gegen keinen goldenen Palast, keinen Swimmingpool, keinen Straßenkreuzer einzutauschen, sondern es mit Zähnen und Nägeln gegen alle Angriffe verteidigen zu wollen. <sup>37</sup>

During the 1970s and 1980s, the images of Westerners were used to an even greater extent to convey political messages. In the few instances where direct portrayals occurred, characterisation was highly stereotypical. Hans-Ulrich Lüdemann's short story 'Eines Abends im Juni...' from the collection *Vergnüglich brummt das Bären-tier, Berlin, ich gratuliere dir* (1987), includes one of the few direct portrayals to be found during this period. It tells of a family gathering in East Berlin which brings together two 13-year-old cousins, Rainer from the East and Fred from the West. The two are constantly portrayed as representing opposite extremes of various spectra. Fred represents a GDR caricature of a West German teenager - he has a bleached mohican haircut, a safety-pin in his ear, carries a pocket computer game, smokes, uses anglicisms such as 'Freeclimbing' and 'Bleib cool, Mann', and appears to care about little. It is implied that Rainer has had a superior education:

"Scheinst tatsächlich Ahnung zu haben. In Sprachen." Irgendwie ärgert Fred sich über den gleichaltrigen Cousin. <sup>38</sup>

Rainer is good at sports, and therefore chooses not to smoke, and he seems to have greater initiative and imagination than his Western cousin,

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<sup>36</sup>Ibid., p34.

<sup>37</sup>Quoted in *Das Kinderbuch : Gedanken und Ansichten*, p205.

<sup>38</sup>Hans-Ulrich Lüdemann, 'Eines Abends im Juni ...', in *Vergnüglich brummt das Bären-tier, Berlin, ich gratuliere dir* (Berlin, 1987), edited by Hilga Cwojdrak and Katrin Pieper, pp51-58, (p51).

as is demonstrated by his attitude towards Fred's computer game:

Rainer findet Gefallen an diesem technischen Spielzeug. Aber seine Phantasie sucht nach einer anderen Geschichte für das, was auf dem Bildschirm vor sich geht. <sup>39</sup>

Just as Fred is a stereotypic Westerner, Fred's life is also representative of received views of the disadvantages of living in the West:

Schlimm genug, daß der Alte seinen Job bei Ullstein verloren hat. Und als Mann über Fünfzig hat er kaum eine Chance, was Neues zu finden. ... Das Auto ist schon verkauft. Zu den Verwandten im Osten jedoch - kein Wort davon! Am Ende fing Tante Edith wieder mit den billigen Mieten für Neubauwohnungen an, mit den niedrigen Preisen für das Alltägliche... <sup>40</sup>

The real difference between the two boys, however, is highlighted through their attitudes to the political actions of others in the past. Rainer is angered by Fred's lack of respect towards a memorial to Reinhold Huhn and others murdered while guarding the GDR border. Fred simply sees the edifice as a challenge to his climbing skills and defends his behaviour to the two uniformed border guards who promptly arrive on the scene:

"Ich bin Westberliner!" Fred Kohldorf gibt sich betont forsch. "Bei uns schert sich kein Bulle drum, wenn einer auf solchen Steinklamotten rumklettert!" <sup>41</sup>

The author proceeds to emphasise the transience of Western culture and the superiority of the East in an elaborately descriptive passage in which Rainer smashes the computer game in front of the memorial:

Mit lautem Krachen zerschellt das kleine technische Wunderwerk auf den akkurat verlegten Gehplatten des eindrucksvoll gestalteten Ehrenhains. <sup>42</sup>

The political dichotomy presented is reiterated at the end of the story when one of the uniformed guards warns the boys of the dangers of following false ideals:

"Gehst du den Bienen nach, gehst du zum Honig. Gehst du aber den

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., p54.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., p52.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., p57.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., p58.

Through the use of stereotypic images, the author emphasises the moral superiority of the East and the futility and corruption of life in the West. However, the story shows the dangers inherent in attempting to portray Westerners. Of the two boys, Fred is by far the more interesting, his outward appearance and lack of respect for authority contrasting starkly with the pale, conformist figure of Rainer. Fred's attributes are ones which are attractive to the young of any nationality and there is a danger that these (and the pocket computer game, unavailable in the East) would appeal more to young readers than the apparent advantages, listed in the story, of living in the East - good education, a job and cheap rent.

This is presumably one of the reasons why direct portrayals of relatives from the West during the Honecker years were increasingly rare. The portrayal of such characters not only raised the subjects of visits from the West and the lack of reciprocal facilities, but gave these relatives human characteristics and therefore potentially created sympathy among the readers. By contrast, as distant and anonymous influences such characters could be demonised by the authors, creating the bogeyman of the Westerner. While Holtz-Baumert's story does not show the Western relative to have had a detrimental effect on the child, in the majority of more recent cases, children with relatives in the West were sent presents and consequently became materialistic in outlook. Although this phenomenon is usually restricted to secondary characters, the trend was so widespread that it was almost possible, when encountering a child character who displays unacceptable characteristics, to anticipate some subsequent allusion to a grandmother in Hamburg or an aunt in Cologne.

On the few occasions where the authors chose as central characters children with relatives in the West, the works acquired a very obvious political nature. While authors deemed it sufficient to criticise the behaviour of minor characters in a similar situation, central characters were required to demonstrate a rejection of Western ideals or at the very least renewed commitment to the GDR's socialism. As was mentioned in the previous chapter, Inez' development in Brigitte Birnbaum's *Das Siebentagebuch* (1984) is shown to improve when she meets Heide. Under the influence of her immediate family, she has become an arrogant and individualistic child, obsessed with possessions. She is sent American jeans

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<sup>43</sup>Ibid., p58.



by her grandmother in Hamburg, and the house is decorated using products sent by Tante Christa and Onkel Siegi in Cologne. Her comfort at home has damaged her ability to understand concepts such as solidarity:

Bisher hatte ich bei unseren Soli-Aktionen nie auf etwas verzichten müssen. Die paar Pfennige für Vietnam oder Chile ..., was war ein Eis schon für ein Verzicht? Im Kühlschrank war sowieso welches, von Mutti hineingelegt. <sup>44</sup>

Only through her temporary removal from these influences is she shown to develop ideals more appropriate to the GDR.

This process can often be seen in stories about adoption. Barbara Kühl's *Irrlichter* (1986), for example, shows how the young could be saved from the effects of Western influences by those committed to the GDR State. Christian's parents, possibly having followed false lights away from the shore, drown at sea. The false orientation is significant. Flashbacks gradually reveal to the reader that Christian's parents were very wealthy and materialistic. The boy's favourite photograph of his mother shows her throwing tomatoes at his father, wasteful in any circumstances, but given their rarity in the GDR, emphatically so. For no plausible reason as far as the plot is concerned, it emerges that Christian has a grandmother in Hamburg who had often sent presents. The author's implication appears to be that materialistic attitudes do not originate in the GDR.

This was a common convention in GDR children's literature. The West is not only shown in an unfavourable light but unacceptable behaviour within the GDR is shown to be a direct result of Western influence. Felicity Ann O'Dell in her study of Soviet children's literature, *Socialisation through children's literature : The Soviet example* (1978), points to a similar pattern there, citing, for example, the fact that, in the portrayal of violence, authors appeared to be more concerned with the political implications of its depiction than with the psychological effects upon the reader. While violence in itself was not apparently taboo in children's literature, its portrayal was restricted to capitalist societies abroad and pre-revolutionary Russia.

Although materialism was depicted as the major influence of the West, other apparent influences from the West were rejected equally as strongly, and unacceptable behaviour shown among the young was

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<sup>44</sup>Brigitte Birnbaum, *Das Siebentagebuch* (Berlin, 1984), p44.

frequently attributed to this cause. In Jürgen Leskien's *Georg* (1984), Olaf Brettschneider instigates the 'test for men' at Georg's school, which involves the 'man' in question having his head held down the toilet. Although this must be a possibility wherever children and toilets coincide, the author stresses a belief that such behaviour does not originate in the GDR. One pupil describes the test as 'irgendein amerikanischer Quatsch' <sup>45</sup>, another is more specific:

Robby hatte dazwischengerufen, der Arsch habe sich das ganz einfach vom Westfernsehen abguckt. <sup>46</sup>

The author uses the character of Georg's new father to explain the wider significance of resorting to such behaviour. He lectures his sons on the importance of moral integrity and points out that materialism and susceptibility to Western ideals go hand in hand:

Vater klopfte mit dem Löffel an Mareks Becher. "In der Berliner Zeitung kann man oft im Anzeigenteil lesen: Verkaufe Jeanskleid oder Stereoanlage - Import - Zeug aus der anderen Welt. Und Olaf und Benn sind auf den Test for men hereingefallen. Und ich frage, warum?"

"Hört sich unerhört politisch an, was du sagst, aber Olaf ist bloß ein kleiner Angeber!" begehrte Marek auf.

Vater ergriff mit einer schnellen Bewegung Mareks Hand. "Wenn solche Einfälle nicht nur in die Arme geraten, sondern auch in den Kopf, wird Politik draus. Kannst du dir merken, mein Sohn!" <sup>47</sup>

Throughout the story, the new family are represented as a favourable influence on Georg who facilitate the boy's socialisation after his early years with an alcoholic mother and his subsequent life in a children's home. It must be assumed, therefore, that such statements are included as representations of the norms to which Georg begins to aspire.

Wolf Spillner warns of the dangers of emulating the West on a larger scale in *Wasseramsel* (1984). The story, for the over-13s, breaks new ground in its depiction of corruption among the higher echelons of GDR society. The father of the central character, Winfried, is a former 'Generaldirektor', who, urged on by his ambitious wife, has built a summer house in a protected nature area and dammed the stream there to create a pond for trout. The local mayor had illegally given his permission for the

<sup>45</sup>Jürgen Leskien, *Georg* (Berlin, 1984), p148.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., p150.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., p150.



house to be built and even resorts to smear tactics to prevent this crime from becoming known. The author, however, makes clear that the origins of this corruption lie in the West. Winfried's father had travelled much to the West on business and been both impressed and worried by what he saw:

“Die Japaner”, sagte der Vater, und er seufzte, “die lassen sich schon was einfallen. Nicht nur diesen Spielkram! Die sind uns in manchem nicht nur ein paar Nasenlängen voraus. Und die machen auch den Westgermanen zu schaffen. Das habe ich deutlich gemerkt in München!” <sup>48</sup>

At an outdoor business reception in Munich uniformed servants had offered the guests fishing rods to fish in the pool for trout which had been specially starved beforehand. On hearing about this, Winfried's mother instigates an attempt to copy it:

“wir müssen besser sein als die da drüben!” <sup>49</sup>

This feeble motivation, along with Winfried's father's growing obsession with the pond - to the extent of shooting birds he suspects of eating his fish - show the couple's behaviour and the entire venture as ridiculous. This is emphasised through the opinions of the their son, whom the author uses to stress the idea that such things have no place in the GDR:

“Die Viecher sind reine Angabe”, sagt er. “Forellen für die Party. Wenn sie groß sind. Ist ja was Dolles, nicht? Selbst geangelt, aus dem eigenen Teich, wenn Gäste da sind. Wie im Westen! Ist doch Scheiße!”

“Ach so”, sagt das Mädchen, aber sie versteht ihn nicht. “Und Westen ist Scheiße?”

“Klar ist Westen Scheiße, wenn man was nachmachen will, was hier nicht hergehört, verstehst du?” <sup>50</sup>

While breaking a major taboo in portraying the abuse of power within the GDR, Spillner implies that extravagance and corruption within the GDR stem solely from a misplaced admiration of and desire to copy the West.

Another incident within the story highlights further the effect such admiration can have on the young when it is taken to extremes.

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<sup>48</sup>Wolf Spillner, *Wasseramsel* (1984), p55.

<sup>49</sup>*Ibid.*, p57.

<sup>50</sup>*Ibid.*, p35.

*Wasseramsel* is one of a spate of children's books during the late 1970s and 1980s which dealt with the children who had been left behind when their parents fled the GDR for West Germany, a topic ignored until this point in children's literature. Spillner's portrayal, in common with the majority, concerned a minor character. The stories universally condemned those who had left. This was commonly achieved through a lack of characterisation of those who fled, or of any indication of life together before the flight, and emphasised through a description of the difficulties faced by those left behind, and moral indignation on the part of the young central characters. In Birnbaum's *Das Siebentagebuch*, Helvi, one of the minor characters, has lived in a children's home since being left behind when her father failed to return from a conference in Munich and her mother, in Czechoslovakia at the time, sought asylum in the embassy in order to join him. The author again points to the connection between materialism and anti-GDR activities when Helvi notices the central character's predilection for Western goods:

“Wart's nur ab!” drohte mir Helvi, verstohlen zur Tür spähend. “Mit schicken Klamotten fing's bei uns auch an.” Sie stopfte allerlei wild durcheinander zurück in ihre Tasche. “Und dann ... kam Papa eines schönen Tages von einer Konferenz in München nicht mehr wieder.”<sup>51</sup>

Birnbaum depicts the child's bitterness in Helvi's rejection of the West and of anything Western : she is even shown to refuse to use the Nivea which Inez had bought at the Intershop, where Western products were sold for hard currency. The overriding emotion in Inez' description of Helvi's predicament is one of sympathy. Authors ensured, when depicting children left behind in this way, that no stigma was attached to them. Those more central figures who, like Hein Himmelangst in Hans-Ulrich Lüdemann's *Ich - dann eine Weile nichts* (1976), defied their parents' wishes and refused to join them in the West were portrayed as the most upright and reliable of characters. Although Hein's parents' flight is motivated - his father had not been given the promotion he perhaps deserved - the condemnation is nevertheless absolute. His parents live in Munich, having sailed away when on holiday at the coast, leaving Hein with Otto, his uncle from Berlin. Otto subsequently had problems with the police and the Stasi who refused to believe that he was not involved. The whole episode is told in retrospect and with no indication of the relationship between parents, child and Otto prior to their departure. A

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<sup>51</sup>*Das Siebentagebuch*, p51.

very one-sided picture is therefore presented, and the young characters show no understanding or forgiveness for the actions of the parents:

“Und was ist mit denen in München?” Mit denen sage ich absichtlich. Denn Eltern will mir einfach nicht über die Lippen. Den Onkel von Berlin holen, dann abhauen und sich nicht um Hein kümmern. Was es alles gibt. <sup>52</sup>

Bärbel's admiration of Hein is shown to increase dramatically when she learns of his refusal to accept his parents' letters or presents (these are forwarded to a local children's home) and his determination to stay in the GDR, despite his parents' plans:

“Otto hat es mir erklärt. Im Stich lassen wollten sie mich wohl nicht. Von einem Anwalt kam mal ein Schreiben. Von wegen Familienzusammenführung und so. Aber ich will da nicht hin. Nie!” <sup>53</sup>

The scorn of the younger characters ensures a message of contempt for those who left the GDR. There was no direct portrayal of those who were contemplating leaving. Presumably the reasoning here was similar to that behind the lack of portrayals of Western relatives : portrayals of this kind could have engendered sympathy for such characters and their actions.

During this period, children's literature tended to concentrate on the detrimental influence of the West in the GDR. There were few examples given of the West's influence in other countries, but where they were to be found, these were highly political, the authors blatantly using children's fiction as a means of propaganda. One striking example can be found in another story in the collection *Vergnüglich brummt das Bären-tier, Berlin, ich gratuliere dir*, published in 1987. Kurt Kauter begins his story 'Ein liebenswerter Steinewerfer', about Mehmed, a Turkish boy living near the American bases in the Dogubayazit area, by pleading for the reader's understanding of Mehmed's actions:

Nein, ich habe kein Herz für Jungens, die Steine werfen: auf Tiere nicht, auf Menschen nicht und nicht auf Autos. Und dennoch möchte ich bitten, einen solchen zu lieben, weil man verstehen kann, warum er das gemacht hat, und daraus zu erkennen ist, daß ein Steinwurf gelegentlich einmal auch etwas Gutes darstellen

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<sup>52</sup>Hans-Ulrich Lüdemann, *Ich - dann eine Weile nichts* (Berlin, 1976), p127.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid., p127.

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The author stresses the poverty faced by Mehmed's village. The villagers cannot afford the irrigation necessary to grow their crops, their only fuel is cow dung, and the men of working age have been forced to go away to find work, leaving children such as Mehmed to look after the animals. This poverty is linked by Kauter very decisively to the arrival of the Americans:

Wenn die Mutter darauf zu sprechen kommt, wird ihre Stimme hart, fast böse: Das seien die verdammten Fremden, sagte sie, die hätten dort drüben, hinter Dogubayazit, eine eigene Stadt gebaut. Die nähmen das Land, als ob es ihr eigenes wäre. Sie nähmen den Türken auch die Erze weg, die Oliven, die Haselnüsse, den Tee und die Weintrauben. Für sie müsse der Staat obendrein noch viel Geld bezahlen. So viel Geld, daß für den Bau zur Bewässerung der Felder keines mehr übrigbleibe. Auch könnten keine Schulen gebaut werden, wie es eigentlich sein sollte. Ach, diese verdammten Fremden! <sup>55</sup>

These soldiers apparently drink, ignore Turkish customs and harass the local women. The story ends with Mehmed throwing a stone through the window of a bus full of foreign tourists who had come down into the village to take photographs of the locals, handing out sweets and biros in return. The women of the village had covered their faces and withdrawn at this intrusion, and Mehmed had felt obliged to defend his mother's honour. The author pleads again at the end of the story for understanding towards the boy's actions, informing the readers that the boy's mother regards him as a hero:

- - - und ich, der ich die Tat an sich nicht billigen kann, möchte bitten, Nachsicht zu üben mit Mehmed, dem lebenswerten Steinewerfer hinten, ganz weit hinten in der Türkei. <sup>56</sup>

It is interesting to note the double standards used in children's literature in this respect. While Soviet troops stationed for example in the GDR are shown only in a favourable light, the influence of the US military can only involve blatant disrespect for the lifestyles and values of others. These double standards can be seen in many areas. While travelling on

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<sup>54</sup>Kurt Kauter, 'Ein lebenswerter Steinewerfer', in *Vergnüglich brummt das Bären-tier, Berlin, ich gratuliere dir* (Berlin, 1987), edited by Hilga Cwojdrak and Katrin Pieper, pp230-235, (p230).

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., p232.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., p235.



business to the West is disapproved of because it promotes materialism and the neglect of the family, travelling to the East does not apparently involve such neglect. Opa Paul in Günter Görlich's *Der unbekannte Großvater* (1984) abandons his family in order to work in Siberia, but on his return years later is still shown by the author as a sympathetic character. Indeed, the author appears to be more critical of the wife and son who snub him on his return. They are shown to be petty and narrow-minded, while Opa Paul demonstrates a more human quality not only in his interpersonal relationships but in his commitment to international solidarity.

Similarly, authors make clear that there is no stigma attached to having foreign relatives so long as these relatives are from the East. In contrast to the images given of the influence of relatives in the West, having a Bulgarian mother represents no discernible problem to Peter in Preuß' *Tschomolungma* (1981). Mathias' Hungarian father in *Die neue Oma aus Budapest*, enriches the boy's life. Tschirner's work even seems to imply that material gains, when arising from work in the East do not lead to the corruption that is caused by material gains from the West. The Hungarians are glad to be working in the GDR as the wages are good and they can send presents back to relatives in Hungary. This fact is much appreciated by Ernő's mother, who had initially disapproved of her son's move to the GDR:

Dann merkte die Mutter, daß so eine Trennung auch kleine Vorteile mit sich bringt; er schickte regelmäßig Geld heim, ihr Leben wurde etwas leichter. <sup>57</sup>

No corruption of character is implied. It seems that material comfort is only to be condemned when emanating from the West.

Double standards can also be seen in the fact that, while the ill-treatment of minorities in the West is emphasised, there was little attempt to use children's literature to promote integration and tolerance of the GDR's own minority groups such as the Sorbs or the 'Gastarbeiter'. This reflects official policy. Neither group was encouraged to integrate. The Sorbs were allowed their own publishing house, the Domowina Verlag, which published a range of children's books in Sorbian. This perhaps helped to ensure the survival of Sorbian culture but led to this culture being ignored in German-language literature.

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<sup>57</sup>Marga Tschirner, *Die neue Oma aus Budapest*, (Berlin, 1977), pp35-36.



During the 1970s and 1980s, children's literature which dealt to any extent with different nationalities served primarily to reinforce the ideas promoted through official ideology and the education system. Given the political circumstances of the GDR, the positive orientation within its children's fiction towards certain areas of the world is to be expected. Similarly, the absence in this literature of various parts of Europe and the world is not in itself abnormal - Eastern Europe plays no great role, for example, in British children's fiction. More disturbing is the use of the political orientation to promote enmity towards the West and Westerners. Children's books encouraged hatred and rejection not only of the West (even where authors were critical of certain aspects of GDR society, there was a tendency to emphasise its advantages over Western society) but of its individual citizens. This rigid association between a political system of government and the individuals who lived under it was dangerously facile. Many children in the GDR already lived in fear of the West. In his article 'Kinder im realen Sozialismus - Notizen zum Kinderalltag in der DDR' <sup>58</sup>, Karl W. Bauer discusses the Kinderbuchverlag's publication *Um sechs Uhr steh ich auf* (1979), a collection of short essays by 11-13-year-olds about their daily lives, and points to the frequency with which they expressed a fear of a nuclear war initiated by the USA. Bauer also indicates that this fear is generally expressed in political set phrases, with the frequent use of concepts such as 'fatherland', indicating that it is not the result of original thought. One 12-year-old, for example, wrote:

Ich fürchte sehr einen neuen Weltkrieg. Denn der wäre furchtbar. Deshalb müssen wir auch dagegen etwas tun. Ich habe auch Angst vor dem Tag, an dem meine Mutti stirbt. Sonst habe ich keine Angst in meinem sozialistischen Vaterland. <sup>59</sup>

Another stated:

Wir leben gut zusammen. Deshalb fürchte ich mich am meisten vor dem Krieg. Er ist ein mörderisches Verbrechen, das nur den Waffenproduzenten kapitalistischer Länder Profit bringt und viele Menschenleben fordert. <sup>60</sup>

Further entries demonstrate how successful the Establishment had

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<sup>58</sup>Karl W. Bauer, "Kinder im realen Sozialismus : Notizen zum Kinderalltag in der DDR", in *Kindheit in Europa : Zwischen Spielplatz und Computer*, edited by Heinz Hengst, (Frankfurt/Main, 1985) pp221-246.

<sup>59</sup>*Um sechs Uhr steh ich auf*, edited by Katrin Pieper, (Berlin, 1979), p84.

<sup>60</sup>*Ibid.*, p95.

been in conveying to the young specific beliefs in the advantages of socialism and the disadvantages of capitalism. A 13-year-old girl claimed:

Weiterhin ist es wichtig, daß ich im Sozialismus lebe. Ich kann mir ein glückliches Leben im Kapitalismus nur schwer vorstellen. Dort, wo es Hunger, Ausbeutung gibt, Arbeitslosigkeit und Verbrecher, möchte ich nicht leben. Aber um das Leben der Kinder in anderen Ländern zu verbessern, übe ich Solidarität. Das ist mir auch sehr wichtig.<sup>61</sup>

By showing the East in a favourable light and maligning Westerners and through them the West in general, authors who criticised certain aspects of life in the GDR reinforced State policies and so indicated support for the general direction of the GDR's ideology. Now that this State has ceased to exist such works can no longer be considered appropriate reading for the young. Given the political circumstances of Unification, it is unlikely that books expressing such sentiments will continue to be in demand or even in circulation.

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<sup>61</sup>Ibid., p63.

## CONCLUSION

It is clear when examining the children's literature published by the Kinderbuchverlag that it was, throughout its existence, considered by those directly involved in the children's book field to have a specific and significant function to perform. It is also clear that alterations in political and literary circumstances caused this to undergo substantial transformations during the 1970s and 1980s. Children's authors during the early years of the GDR's existence had continually stressed the importance of producing a children's literature which served the aims of the State by contributing to the young reader's socialist education. Author Ruth Werner, for example, stated unequivocally:

Wenn unsere Literatur dieser Gesellschaftsordnung und diesem Staat dient, dann wird es eine gute Literatur.<sup>1</sup>

The literary merits of children's literature were clearly subordinated to its didactic functions. The author Hansgeorg Meyer in 1961 referred to works of children's fiction as 'Lehrbücher des sozialistischen Lebens'<sup>2</sup>. To this generation of authors, children's literature was a didactic exercise, shaping the opinions of the young into a form which would best ensure the future of the State and of socialism.

While sharing with their predecessors in the GDR a belief in the importance of fiction in influencing the opinions of the young, authors during Honecker's term of office demonstrated a very different approach. In portraying GDR society, for example, many authors appear to have been motivated by a desire for social change. Particularly in the light of the highly restricted media, children's literature was often seen as a vehicle for conveying ideas to young readers and encouraging attitudes which differed from the official ones the young encountered through the education system and the youth organisations. Author Hannes Hüttner felt that authors acted as the external conscience in this respect: through fiction it was possible to propagate a certain view of the world without appearing ideologically strident or repelling the young with blatant didacticism.

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<sup>1</sup>Ruth Werner, quoted in 'Positionen. Meinungen. Angebote', in *Sonntag* 24 1978 (11 June, 1978), pp3-4, (p4).

<sup>2</sup>Hansgeorg Meyer, *Pionierleben im Kinderbuch* (Berlin, 1962), p42.

In ihren besten Erzeugnissen befiehlt und fordert sie nicht, sie regt an, sich mit der Welt neu ins Benehmen zu setzen und sich, die Welt oder beides zu ändern. Indem sie Widersprüche schildert, etwa jenen zwischen Idealität und Realität, lädt sie zur Einmischung ein. Sie ist auf eine durchaus freiwillige Weise zwingend.<sup>3</sup>

Children's writers thus pointed the readers in certain desired directions, inciting the young to take action where they felt certain aspects of society were intolerable. The desire for change led authors to concentrate on criticising various social phenomena through focussing on the less successful aspects of society, depicting family breakdown and the burdens placed on the individual and on the family by work. Perhaps even more significantly, they encouraged the young to think for themselves, to question their society and its treatment of those who did not conform, to query the acceptance of authority which was expected of them and to insist on the right to their own views and approach to socialism. These two major aspects appear above all to characterise the portrayal of life in the GDR in the children's literature of the Honecker era.

However, this use of children's literature as a means of bringing certain topics to public attention and promoting their discussion often led to a situation where it was difficult to determine at whom the authors' message was aimed. Karin Richter wrote in 1989:

Kinderliteratur ist oft nicht Literatur für Kinder, sondern ihr Gegenstand ist das Kind; die Gestaltung seiner Probleme ist als Impuls für eine soziale Gemeinschaft zu verstehen, die Strukturen und Vorgänge innerhalb ihres Gemeinwesens zu hinterfragen. Dieser Gestus der Kinderliteratur ist in den letzten Jahren immer energischer geworden. Er hat nichts zu tun mit dem schon zur Platitude geronnenen Satz, daß dieses oder jenes Kinderbuch auch von dem Erwachsenen mit Gewinn gelesen werden kann.<sup>4</sup>

As Richter states, this was clearly not simply a question of achieving the emancipation of children's literature which had been so often spoken of during the formative years of the GDR. Promoting change through writing for the adults of tomorrow can prove a very slow process and, as

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<sup>3</sup>Hannes Hüttner, 'Arbeit und Familie in der Kinder- und Jugendliteratur (Vortrag zur Theoretischen Konferenz des Schriftstellerverbandes der DDR anlässlich der 24. Tage der Kinder- und Jugendliteratur der DDR)', in *Kinderliteratur-Report* 1/1986, pp7-16, (pp9-10).

<sup>4</sup>Karin Richter, "... Am Kind wird klar, so war das Leben gemeint" (Diskussionsgrundlagen zur Theoretischen Konferenz des Schriftstellerverbandes der DDR anlässlich der 27. Tage der Kinder- und Jugendliteratur der DDR)', in *Kinderliteratur-Report* 2/1989, pp18-24, (p20-21).



author Peter Abraham admitted <sup>5</sup> in 1989 shortly after the opening of the GDR borders, ideals were often frustrated by social realities: a child who behaved in the manner advocated in GDR children's literature would encounter great difficulties in GDR society as it was. Many authors therefore presented in their children's literature messages which were apparently aimed at an adult audience. This was clear above all where the object of criticism was one against which the child was powerless to act. If this is the case, then it must be assumed that authors had a long-term interest in writing for the adults of the future or that children's literature was being used as a forum for bringing certain topics into public discussion. Although the stories were usually told from a child's viewpoint, authors often intended to provoke adults to consider their behaviour, particularly towards the young, and to warn them of the possible consequences. A great deal of their criticism was levelled at the complacent behaviour of the parent generation which was often contrasted with that of the more active generation of the grandparents who had also struggled to achieve change and were therefore held up as an example to the young.

Since Unification, the issue of social criticism has become one around which a great deal of debate has centred, with the nature of the GDR's alternative scene subject to particular scrutiny. Evidence suggests that a great deal of social criticism was in fact highly controlled through a strong Stasi infiltration of alternative groups. It is impossible at this stage to estimate whether or how far this was the case with children's literature. What is clear is a firm belief on the part of the majority of those involved in the field of children's books during the Honecker years that they were providing an alternative to the official ideology. Steffen Peltsch, editor of the *Beiträge...* claimed at the 'Roter Elefant' conference in Bremen in 1989 that those who had wanted affirmation of their alternative opinions and standpoints had listened to radio plays after 11pm or had read children's literature. At the same conference Christian Emmrich even suggested that the message of social criticism and independent thought to be found in many children's books had played a significant role in encouraging the young people who 'voted with their feet' in 1989 to demand what they wanted. This demonstrates the idealistic view those involved had of the role of children's literature, since it must ultimately be accepted that a large

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<sup>5</sup>Conference entitled 'Darstellung von Geschichte und Zeitgeschichte in der Kinder- und Jugendliteratur', organised by 'Roter Elefant e.V. Arbeitskreis Kinder - Bücher - Medien', 24-26 November 1989, Bremen.



proportion of those who left the GDR in 1989 did so for materialistic rather than idealistic reasons. It can be argued that they were given the courage to do so through children's literature, but materialism itself was stringently condemned in the children's books of this period. In a society where journalism and the media in general were so heavily controlled, any attempt to bring new topics into discussion must be seen as a significant stance taken against State taboos. Ultimately, however, whether due to external pressure or self-censorship, writers were unable to shed entirely the early role attributed to children's authors. The harmonious endings, the sanitised view of the past and the use of national stereotypes which permeated so much of the children's literature of this period reinforced the ideology of the established order and this detracts from claims to have provided an alternative. To suggest that children's literature had been an intrinsic part of the alternative scene would be an exaggeration.

It is also debatable how wide an adult audience was reached through children's fiction. Surveys showed <sup>6</sup> that those children who spoke at all about what they had read preferred to do so with their own peer group. Meet-the-author sessions and library events ensured that the discussion was not restricted solely to the writers and critics directly involved in the field, and publications such as the *Weimarer Beiträge* or the annual *DDR-Literatur im Gespräch* did provide some space for the discussion of children's literature, but these were not indicative of substantial progress towards widespread public debate. The nature of the portrayals for the young of adult problems also hindered this to some extent. These ostensibly provided a more authentic picture of society than had previously been found in works for children, encouraging the readers to sympathise with the difficulties adults faced and urging them to consider change. However, these issues were often simplified for the young, showing the adult behaviour as bad and that of the young characters as good. Such stories concentrated on the effects adult behaviour has on the young and thus ensured that the sympathies of young readers were definitely on the side of the latter. Young readers were therefore unlikely to empathise with adult problems, while to adult readers it must often have appeared that individual behaviour rather than social circumstances were to blame for the difficulties portrayed.

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<sup>6</sup>See Karin Richter, 'Wirklichkeitsmodellierung und Adressatenbezug : Einige Fragen an die Kinder- und Jugendliteratur und ihre Theorie', in *Schauplatz : Aufsätze zur Kinder- und Jugendliteratur und zu anderen Medienkünsten*, edited by Joachim Schmidt, (Berlin, 1986) pp25-36.

As has already been stated, the simplification for children of adult problems often tended to diminish the impact of the authors' message. The impact was also muted by both long editing processes and children's reading habits. When works such as *Umberto* took six years to reach publication, and surveys showed that the majority of books read by the young were over a year old, the immediate relevance of most children's stories must be questionable. This was aggravated by the lack of paper made available to publishers such as the Kinderbuchverlag. In the climate of change and criticism in late 1989 an open letter from Katrin Pieper, Chief Editor of the Kinderbuchverlag, to Klaus Höpcke, Deputy Minister of Culture with special responsibilities for literature, was published in *Junge Welt* and in the *Beiträge...*, expressing anger at the limitations this had placed on the Kinderbuchverlag's output:

Seit Jahren hat mein Verlag es mit berechtigten Klagen über fehlende Bücher für Kinder zu tun. Seit Jahren realisieren die Druckereien nicht das Programm des Kinderbuchverlages, seit Jahren tragen wir unsere Klagen über fehlende Druck- und Papierkapazitäten vor, seit Jahren hat sich nichts geändert, es ist immer nur schlechter geworden. Das 40ste Jahr des Bestehens des Verlages wird sein beschämendstes sein. Nicht weil es an Manuskripten und Buchkunst fehlen würde, sondern weil mehr als die Hälfte unserer Erstauflagen nicht gedruckt werden. Es sind mehrere Millionen Bücher, die in diesem Jahr den Leser nicht erreichen. <sup>7</sup>

Criticism inevitably became more widespread and vociferous as the demise of the GDR approached. The final works to emerge demonstrated a continued belief in a duty to reflect social developments and to act as an external conscience of society. This can be seen very clearly in Christa Kozik's *Kicki und der König*, one of the final children's books to be written in the GDR. The book tells of King Karl of 'Maienland', his relationships with wealthy 'Juniland' next door and with 'Oktoberland', a land whose new system of openness he wishes to emulate. He is helped in his task of reforming the land by Kicki, a cat who can smell the truth and thus detect all the deceit and injustice which is taking place within the country. The work reflects the GDR authors' belief in the importance literature plays in influencing the young in order to change situations which the authors see as unacceptable. The king states:

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<sup>7</sup>Ich habe andere Fragen : Nachdruck des Briefes der Cheflektorin Katrin Pieper an Klaus Höpcke aus der "Jungen Welt" vom 31.10.1989', in *Beiträge...* 94 (1990), p83.

“Ich glaube, mit Kindern kann man die Welt am besten verändern. Denn sie sind die immer neue Hoffnung, daß die Welt besser wird.” <sup>8</sup>

Although the work was designated for the over-8s, the issues which the cat reveals - the unsatisfactory nature of, for example, shop and restaurant service, the railways and the press - were not particularly those which affected children. By contrast, the school system is shown to require few changes: most children, the author states, enjoy going to school. Having determined whom he can trust and provided a greater motivation for his subjects, the king has little difficulty in altering behaviour patterns and bringing reform to what is shown as an acceptable system of government.

The work was initially rejected by the Kinderbuchverlag Berlin, ostensibly on aesthetic grounds. It was accepted in 1990 by the West German Hoch-Verlag to great critical acclaim as a political children's book, and the Kinderbuchverlag subsequently revised its opinions and brought out its own edition in September, 1990.

The differing critical reception of the work in the East and the West indicates their fundamental differences in attitude towards the GDR's children's literature. While in the West, though not directly relevant to children there, the work was welcomed as a political children's book and a courageous break from perceived patterns of propagandistic literature, in the East the work was widely condemned. Critics in the GDR felt that it was too coloured by the author's personal frustration and bitterness and that, on the whole, too much is presented as fact and too few demands are made of the reader. Used to the more subtle criticisms which can be discovered in Kožík's other works, such as *Der Engel mit dem goldenen Schnurrbart* or *Ein Schneemann für Afrika* <sup>9</sup>, this was perhaps too blatant.

The fact that the Kinderbuchverlag decided to publish the work despite reservations is perhaps indicative of the pressure from the West which children's book publishing in the GDR faced after Unification, both in editorial and commercial terms. At this point there was little serious

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<sup>8</sup>Christa Kózik (sic), *Kicki und der König* (Stuttgart, 1990), p189.

<sup>9</sup>Although, with its stereotypic images, perhaps the most conventional of her works, here too criticism can be found, particularly in the scene in which the snowman decides to evaporate rather than be locked in the refrigerator in order to survive- “Es beschädigt die Seele, immer eingesperrt zu sein. - Auch die Seele eines Schneemannes.” (Christa Kožík, *Ein Schneemann für Afrika* (Berlin, 1987), p55).

contemplation of Unification. As in the story, society was finally presented with the opportunity to achieve change along the lines of Gorbachev's perestroika programme. A comment by the author inserted in the Kinderbuchverlag's version of the book demonstrates the optimism which surrounded the events of November, 1989:

Dieses Buch wurde schon vor einigen Jahren gedacht und geschrieben. Plötzlich hat unsere Zeit schnelle Füße, und jeder Tag bringt neue Wahrheiten. Vieles, was in diesem Buch als Vision und Hoffnung ausgesprochen ist, hat sich jetzt erfüllt. Die wahrheitsriechende Katze Kicki aber wird weiterhin die Stimme des Volkes bleiben.

Christa Kožik

am 9. November 1989 <sup>10</sup>

It remains to be seen whether GDR authors will be able, in the light of subsequent changes, to adapt to the new circumstances surrounding children's literature in the unified Germany. The opening of the borders and the ensuing Unification inevitably led to new social and literary circumstances to which those involved in the field of children's books were forced to adapt. First indications of authors' abilities to do this do not bode well. The immediate response to the events of 1989 was the publication of *Wahnsinn! Geschichten vom Umbruch in der DDR* (1990), effectively the last GDR children's book, although, perhaps significantly, this collection of short stories by various established and less well-known GDR authors was published in West Germany by the Ravensburger Verlag. Authors were inevitably more outspoken in their criticism than had perhaps been previously possible, yet many showed some degree of ambivalence towards the changes. The twenty contributions contain many familiar elements - a high percentage of single mothers, for example, and of parents with little time for their children. As before, the education system is the target of much criticism, no longer simply through the criticism of individual teachers' behaviour. Gunter Preuß, for example, links the GDR State to repressive and dictatorial social systems of the past in a short play about the ghosts of three schoolboys who had met tragic fates at the hands of various education systems, one at the turn of the century, one at the end of the Second World War and one in the GDR. All three welcome the changes occurring around them as a liberation from repression. Peter Abraham's story 'Der Traum' shows a girl who refuses to withdraw a school essay in which she describes her dream of a sailing trip to Denmark, despite pressure placed on her at school and in her private life

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<sup>10</sup>Christa Kožik, *Kicki und der König* (Berlin, 1990), p5.



to replace it with something of a more politically conscious and uncontroversial nature, describing a dream of peace and socialism. Abraham demonstrates how a system which insists on curbing individualism to such extremes serves only to alienate its citizens. The story ends with the girl's decision to go to church to meet others who share her opinions.

Abraham breaks taboos by demonstrating how those with power could act to restrict the individual who did not conform. As could be expected of such a publication, many similar taboos are broken. Here, perhaps for the first time, many authors voiced a degree of criticism which could not be found in their earlier works. There were several expressions of dissatisfaction with political circumstances, particularly resentment of travel restrictions and the abuse of power by those in authority. Occasional characters appear as victims of the system, their working lives made impossible because of their refusal to comply. Most noticeable are the references to and portrayals of the Stasi whose existence had been ignored in children's literature. Here their presence and methods are dealt with critically in almost half of the stories, two of which (by Volker Ebersbach and Eva Maria Kohl) also deal with police brutality.

However, the nature of the various portrayals often demonstrates a reluctance to criticise the GDR State. Three stories, for example, portray as innocent victims young girls whose fathers worked for the Stasi. Each girl suffers after the changes and has problems in coming to terms with the fact that her father is now regarded as a criminal. Each is treated differently by her friends who wish to express disapproval of the Stasi's activities. The narrative sympathy is always with these daughters who are depicted as being unaware of the extent of their fathers' activities and feel betrayed. Christa Grasmeyer in her story 'Was hast du getan?' even demonstrates some sympathy for the father figure involved. Although the daughter is shown to disapprove of his methods, the author draws parallels between these and the girl's attempt to question him about his activities, equating judgement by the Stasi with judgment of the Stasi:

Mochte er schuldig sein, sie war es auch. Mochte er andere Menschen unter Druck gesetzt und zum Reden gezwungen haben, sie hatte das auch versucht. Obwohl sie nichts von ihm wußte, hatte sie



ihn verurteilt, bloß deshalb, weil er sich verweigerte.<sup>11</sup>

The author belittles the significance of the Stasi's activities, creating sympathy for those who, having placed such blind faith in a system, are now victims of the changes, at a loss to know how to behave. The Stasi are shown to be driven on not by power but by an immense idealism and thus excused to some extent of the methods used to achieve their goals.

There is a similar reluctance on the part of the contributors to this work to relinquish their established stance on the West. The stereotypic and prejudiced portrayals are still very much in evidence. The West Germans depicted are patronising and arrogant, particularly the tourists in Jutta Schlott's 'Klimaverschiebung':

Je näher sie dem Zentrum kam, desto mehr Touristen mit Stadtplänen und Fotoapparaten, Videokameras begegneten ihr. Die Fremden behaupteten selbstsicher die Mitte der Gehwege, ungeniert riefen sie sich abfällige Bemerkungen über den Zustand der Gebäude zu.<sup>12</sup>

The theme continues throughout the story with the West depicted as an economic threat and morally corrupt. The building which the central character intends to transform into a 'green' library is given to a wealthy Hamburg newspaper concern which displays semi-pornographic photographs in the windows.

Those who settle in the West are generally shown to do so for materialistic reasons:

"Gefällt's dir hier im Westen?" fragte ich.  
"Klar, sieh bloß mal in die Geschäfte. Du kriegst, was du willst, siebzehn Sorten Kaugummi, echte Coca Cola und jeden Tag Bananen."<sup>13</sup>

These characters are depicted as very shallow individuals who invariably and somewhat stereotypically make pathetic attempts to fit in in the West by dying their hair green or blue.

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<sup>11</sup>Christa Grasmeyer, 'Was hast du getan?', in *Wahnsinn! Geschichten vom Umbruch in der DDR* edited by Peter Abraham and Margareta Gorschenek (Ravensburg, 1990), pp219-232, (p232).

<sup>12</sup>Jutta Schlott, 'Klimaverschiebung', in *Wahnsinn! ...* pp270-283, (p271).

<sup>13</sup>Helga Talke, 'Würmchen', in *Wahnsinn! ...* pp82-99, (p95).

Those who are attracted to the West are also generally portrayed as being morally irresponsible. The young single mother in Hannes Hüttner's 'Ricardo' dreams of the material riches outside the GDR:

"Weißt du, was uns retten kann, Ricci? Nur ein Scheißmillionär kann uns retten. Er hält mit einem dicken Auto und spricht: 'Fräulein Karla? Herr Ricci? Wollen Sie mit mir nach Hollywood fahren?' Statt dessen leben wir in Honniwood. Honniwood ist Scheiße, aber Hollywood ist Spitze, Ricci!" <sup>14</sup>

In searching among the revellers at the Wall on 9 November for someone to fulfil her dream, she neglects her young son and this leads to his death at the end of the story. Symbolically, he falls from the Wall, a victim of the dangers created by the changing political situation.

The painting of the moral degeneracy of the West and its influence is taken to extremes in Maria Seidemann's story 'Bernie im Glück', which depicts the West as fraught with dangers for the young. At the beginning of the story the young central character gives a cynical rendition of his mother's view of West Berlin:

Allein läßt sie mich natürlich nicht rüber, ganz klar, die Gefahren sind viel zu groß, die Kriminalität, der Drogenhandel, von Aids ganz zu schweigen, fehlt nur noch der böse Wolf, der mich fressen könnte. <sup>15</sup>

The events which Seidemann goes on to describe, however, serve only to emphasise this view. The boy goes to West Berlin alone, is tricked and threatened by punks who want to steal his money, confronted with poverty, unwittingly picked up by a homosexual who attempts to show him pornographic films back at his flat, and he recognises the homesickness of the former GDR citizens who had settled in the West. The story reinforces prejudices in an attempt to warn the young of the dangers of a capitalist society.

Only Günter Saalman, as ever slightly controversial and in tune with the developments of the time, warns in his story of the threat to foreigners which a growing German unity may present. In his portrayal of boys in a children's home discussing the changes, one tells the others that he will go to the West with his father:

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<sup>14</sup>Hannes Hüttner, 'Ricardo', in *Wahnsinn! ...* pp73-81, (p77).

<sup>15</sup>Maria Seidemann, 'Bernie im Glück', in *Wahnsinn! ...* pp144-161, (p145).

“Mein Alter und ich, wir machen die Flocke. Er kriegt die Heizerstelle in der Firma. Sein Onkel muß bloß noch den Kanaken rauskanten, der den Job jetzt hat.”<sup>16</sup>

It also emerges at the end of the story that the secret photo another boy has been treasuring, one which he leads the other boys to assume is very special, is of the right-wing leader Schönhuber. Saalman chooses not to portray racism simply as a problem of the West but of both Germanies.

Compared to the active heroes found in the children's literature prior to the opening of the GDR borders, the children depicted in this collection are on the whole surprisingly passive. The majority here are confused and, although many are shown to welcome change, only one child - in Volker Ebersbach's 'Daniel' - is shown to reflect upon events, join the demonstrations and experience the joy of campaigning for his beliefs. It is an unfortunate lack, and perhaps simply mirrored the authors' own confusion about the direction which events would take. Having for so long placed great faith in the power of literature to help shape the opinions of the young and to enable them to come to terms with the changing world around them, the authors provide a very confusing overall picture here.

The aim in publishing the book was essentially to provide a record of the moods and atmosphere of those particular months when change was rife. This was stated almost apologetically by the editors (Peter Abraham and Margareta Gorschenek) in the introduction:

Uns erschien es wichtig, diese besondere Zeit festzuhalten, und zwar so, wie sie in der DDR erlebt und empfunden wurde. Die Autoren dieses Buches, namhafte Schriftsteller für Kinder und Jugendliche aus der DDR, haben ihre Geschichten alle in den aufregendsten Wochen des Jahreswechsels 1989/1990 aufgeschrieben. So entstanden literarische Dokumente, wie sie nur diese Wochen und Monate hervorbringen konnten.<sup>17</sup>

The book will certainly be seen rather for its historical than its literary merits. There is little encouragement given to the young to welcome change as had previously been the case, and in the light of Unification, the attitude shown towards the West will perhaps ensure the

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<sup>16</sup>Günter Saalman, 'Die Dusche', in *Wahnsinn! ...* pp189-193, (p192).

<sup>17</sup>*Wahnsinn! ...*, p7.

work's demise. Peter Dittmar, reviewing the work in *Die Welt* in an article entitled 'Was sie schon immer wußten, aber auch heute nicht sagen', was highly critical of the book. He found the stories extremely stylised and felt that the authors had, in the six months since the opening of the borders, been unable to shed the patterns of censorship and illusion to which they had worked. He claimed that the circumstances of Unification would best be covered by those who had not been so closely involved in the GDR literary system:

Die 'Bewältigung' der DDR-Vergangenheit im Kinder- und Jugendbuch bedarf einer anderen 'Betroffenheit' als des Zwanges zur Anpassung an geänderte politische Verhältnisse. Die Hoffnung ruht deshalb eher auf denen, die in der DDR geschrieben haben, aber dort nicht veröffentlichen konnten.<sup>18</sup>

However, for the authors who contributed to have acquired a new stance in such a short and confusing period would not only have indicated opportunism but would have signified the renouncement of their previous writings. After years of schematic writing and self-censorship, it will inevitably take time for these authors to develop a style and approach more appropriate to the new circumstances.

After the opening of the GDR borders, it was clear that major changes to the children's book and the structural organisations surrounding it were inevitable. After the disappearance of the political circumstances which had governed children's literature, the role played in society by the book would necessarily change. The authors attending the 'Roter Elefant' conference in Bremen in 1989 expressed optimism about the future of children's literature. However, with the media now at liberty to discuss most aspects of society and the State and to provide social criticism, children's literature lost a significant function, thus severely reducing its status and that of its authors. No longer guaranteed State support, many authors worried about their futures, having complied with the established order for so long, and objected to the fact that their works would now be subject to the economic forces of demand and to the prospect of having to earn money through public readings.

Their futures now hinge on their ability to adapt to the new circumstances. Obviously changes will be noticed in the themes dealt with

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<sup>18</sup>Peter Dittmar, 'Was sie schon immer wußten, aber auch heute nicht sagen', in *Die Welt*, 31 October, 1990, p22.



in the future, now that authors are no longer subject to the same political pressures or obligations. Several authors have tended towards adventure stories, perhaps tempted to explore this genre as a less controversial and less audience-specified alternative to the depiction of everyday life. Those who risk depicting everyday life must take into consideration the likely readership of their proposed works - whether, for example, there remains a specifically 'GDR' market. The creation and apparent success of the publishing house LeiV in Leipzig, which concentrates on translations from Eastern European languages and on authors and illustrators from the former GDR suggests that such a market may exist. However, the long-term possibility of the former GDR clinging to some sort of state identity by the use of the image of its inhabitants as second-class citizens, patronised by the richer West, seems remote: precisely because the western part of Germany is wealthier and because all children's literature is now subject to market forces, it seems inevitable that, with rising prices and soaring unemployment in the East, any author who wishes to make a living must now cater for the wider audience and that the major taboo for children's authors in the future will be anti-capitalism.

With a more commercial dimension to children's literature, authors whose livelihood was guaranteed in the Honecker years now face threats not least of all through competition from the West. When the GDR borders were opened, there was an influx of West German children's literature which inevitably fascinated through its novelty value. Alex Hempel, Director of the Kinderbuchverlag Berlin, complained <sup>19</sup> that Unification had led to a higher availability of paper for printing, but that bookshops' demand for GDR books had decreased considerably. <sup>20</sup>

Not only was there a dramatic influx of West German children's books, there was also a huge rise in the number of translations from the English language. These made up 5% of the translations available in

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<sup>19</sup>Alex Hempel, 'Mit dem Gesicht zum Leser hat den Nachteil: Man erkennt schwerlich das Profil', in *Kinderliteratur-Report* 1/1990, pp65-67.

<sup>20</sup>In what was formerly East Berlin few bookshops now stock works by the Kinderbuchverlag. Many believed that the Kinderbuchverlag had ceased to exist after a deal under which the Kinderbuchverlag was to be taken over in February 1992 by the West German Ravensburger Verlag and the French publishing house Gallimard fell through. A recent trip (April, 1993) revealed that of those works dealt with in this thesis only Alfred Wellm's *Karlchen Duckdich*, Günter Saalman's *Umberto* and Christa Kozik's *Kicki und der König* could be found on the bookshop shelves.



Eastern Europe before the changes, compared with over two-thirds in the Federal Republic. These new works demanded shelf space which inevitably led to further disappearances of familiar GDR children's books.

A further threat to the role of GDR's children's authors and their works has presented itself in the form of the increased availability of toys, videos and computer games, the lack of which in the GDR had ensured the book's popularity. Hannes Hüttner's surveys <sup>21</sup> claimed that a third of all GDR parents read to their children in the evenings and that book ownership in the GDR was ten times higher than in West Germany. Library membership among the young was also very high. This had led to self-complacent slogans such as 'Leseland-DDR'. Now it was seen that there were also negative reasons for the book's popularity, namely its lack of competition.

The alterations in the role and position of the children's book inevitably led to changes in the structural organisation surrounding children's literature. The fact that children's literature had often been used as a vehicle to bring particular subject areas to public attention had had two major disadvantages: it had made critics, recognising breakthroughs in subject matter, more reluctant to concentrate on a work's aesthetic weaknesses, and often the attempts to bring new subject matter to the readers led to a pessimistic portrayal of society, concentrating on its failures. Critics were inclined to be lenient in their reviews out of fear that negative criticism could be used politically against the author. Now that other media have taken over the role the children's book has hitherto played, children's authors are more at liberty to cover the themes of their choice and critics able to comment more honestly on the qualities of the books in question.

Other structural changes to the children's book field have included the closure of administrative bodies, such as the DDR-Zentrum für Kinderliteratur, which were perceived to have had too strong a political involvement with the Honecker regime. After its closure, Sabine Mähne and other GDR children's literature specialists, among them Claudia Rouvel, set up the Gemeinschaft zur Förderung der Kinder- und Jugendliteratur in order to meet the threat to the reading habits of the children of the former GDR.

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<sup>21</sup>Hannes Hüttner, 'Leseinteressen und Leseverhalten von Kindern und Jugendlichen in der DDR', speech given at the 'Roter Elefant' conference in Bremen, 1989.

Publication of the *Beiträge...* also ceased soon after the opening of the GDR borders, its financial support having disappeared. An attempt was made by its editor Steffen Peltsch to revive the journal in 1992. Peltsch, in an introduction to the edition, explained his reasons for doing so and attempted, apologetically, to defend the integrity of the publication:

Die 'Beiträge' waren kein Fachblatt, das unter DDR-Zuständen als Geheimtip wissenschaftlicher Aufmüpfigkeit galt. Wir haben uns aus verschiedenen Gründen, die Zeitengründe nicht zu vergessen, Wagnisse versagt nach dem Motto, daß eine getilgte Zeitschrift gar nichts, eine beharrlich Humanismus anmahnende, leise - meist die Literatur zum Vehikel nehmende - Schul- und Kulturpolitikkritik doch etwas bewirken könne. Es gab Verbeugungen, höchst überflüssige, vor der Macht in den siebziger Jahren, da kam sogar Honecker zu Worte. Das ist nicht von denen zu verantworten, die das Blatt später herausgaben. <sup>22</sup>

He endeavoured to build on the previous success of the publication while also making clear that this was a new beginning: thus the edition was titled 'No. 96' but also 'Heft 1/1992'. Despite this optimism, this later emerged as the final edition of the periodical.

Although the Kinderbuchverlag still survives, having been purchased in the summer of 1992 by the West German giant Meissinger Gruppe München, its capacity has been severely reduced. Whereas previously the publishing house had an output of 160 titles per year, 1993 has seen the publication of 18 new works. Reprints of its past publications have also been reduced - only 114 titles are still available to order. <sup>23</sup> It is perhaps the ideological nature of its international outlook which will be the greatest threat to the survival of a great deal of the GDR's children's fiction. In the light of Unification, the national stereotypes used must be particularly confusing to the readers. In Leipzig children's libraries placed labels in many books warning of the changes in political circumstances and acknowledging the confusion caused:

'Liebe Leser! Mit diesem Hinweis wollen wir Dich darauf aufmerksam machen, daß das vorliegende Buch Aussagen enthält, die nicht mehr richtig sind. Dennoch meinen wir, daß man das Buch nicht wegwerfen muß, daß es sich lohnt, darin zu lesen und sich mit dem Geschriebenen auseinanderzusetzen. Solltest Du Fragen haben,

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<sup>22</sup>Steffen Peltsch, 'In eigener Sache', in *Beiträge...* 96 (Heft 1,1992) pp5-6, (p5).

<sup>23</sup>Marianne H.-Stars, 'Dieses Buch hab ich lieb, wer's stiehlt, ist ein Dieb', in *Leipziger Buchmesse*, 2 June, 1993, p8.

wende Dich bitte an Deine Eltern, Lehrer oder Bibliothekare.’<sup>24</sup>

Children’s libraries in the eastern half of Berlin continue to stock the former works, at a reduced capacity<sup>25</sup> in order to accommodate newer works of Western origin. Librarians admit that those works written in the former GDR are scarcely read.

Works reflecting life in a state which no longer exists will no longer appear relevant to young readers. Not only is the political outlook promoted in children’s literature now totally inappropriate, but works which concentrated on exposing social circumstances or encouraging independent thought have now lost their immediate significance. Thus it is not simply those works which contain highly favourable portraits of the politics of the time which are now in danger of being forgotten. Since translations of children’s literature portraying very different cultures are popular it could be assumed that the GDR setting would not hinder a work’s popularity. However, perhaps the authors’ perception of the function of children’s literature during the Honecker era is too dominant. Translations of such works during this period were relatively few: abroad such literature was often seen as schematic. Dusan Roll, former President of IBBY claimed at a conference<sup>26</sup> in Klagenfurt in August, 1992 that much of this literature had not been accepted for translation in the CSSR because it was felt to be written according to set patterns.

The message conveyed in many GDR children’s books may now be irrelevant to the unified German society, yet precisely because of the nature of writing for children in the GDR these works are invaluable documents of the period. Jürgen Kuczynski<sup>27</sup> repeatedly stated that to future historians GDR fiction would provide a more accurate picture of society than the majority of sociological studies published within the State since these tended to portray the State in a highly favourable light and

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<sup>24</sup>Quoted in Sabine Mähne, ‘Ein offener Brief’, in *Kinderliteratur-Report* 1/1990, pp17-19, (p18).

<sup>25</sup>Certain works, such as those by Siegfried Dietrich which were perceived to have encouraged young boys to join the army, have been banned.

<sup>26</sup> ‘Tabus in der Kinder- und Jugendliteratur - 28. Tagung des Internationalen Instituts für Jugendliteratur und Leseforschung’, 23-28 August, 1992, Klagenfurt.

<sup>27</sup>See, for example, Jürgen Kuczynski, ‘Brief an Hermann Kant’, in *Neue Deutsche Literatur* 10/1980, pp156-165, (p158).

gloss over difficulties. Kuczynski's assertion was even more relevant for children's literature as authors felt obliged to highlight social problems in order to enable the young to face up to such difficulties and contemplate solutions. During Honecker's term of office, the earlier perception of children's literature persisted to some extent, with children's authors continuing to see their role as one of enlightenment in order to ensure the future development of society. As in the early days, it was felt that forcing children to face the realities of life would make them immune to manipulation. Authors favoured a high degree of authenticity in order to make the young aware of their responsibility for the future of society. These works therefore provide a more accurate picture of society than can be found elsewhere.

It is common for slight alterations in political thinking to lead to certain books disappearing from the shelves. Only rarely does a complete change in circumstances such as that which occurred on Unification force so complete a revision. GDR authors displayed a firm belief that their writing had an important part to play in influencing the opinion of the young. With the emergence of other media aimed at the young, the popularity of the children's book has been significantly reduced, and the role of children's literature as perceived in the GDR has disappeared along with the society to which it referred. In the light of these new circumstances, those works published for children in the GDR face the prospect of being dismissed as products of a now obsolete political system, of interest only as sociological documents.



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## APPENDIX 1: GLOSSARY OF TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Arbeitsgemeinschaft für das Kinder- und Jugendbuch -  
Association for Books for Children and Young People - founded 1959

Children's Book Week - Tage der Kinderliteratur - begun 1963, held  
annually, each time in a different region of the GDR

DDR-Zentrum für Kinderliteratur - GDR-Centre for Children's  
Literature - 1970-1990, Berlin

FDJ - Freie Deutsche Jugend - youth organisation for the over-14s, to  
which young progressed from the Young Pioneers

Gemeinschaft zur Förderung der Kinder- und Jugendliteratur -  
Society for the Promotion of Children's and Youth Literature - founded  
1992, Berlin

IBBY - International Board on Books for Young People - founded 1953,  
Zürich

Kuratorium Sozialistischer Kinderliteratur - Committee of Socialist  
Children's Literature - founded 1970

Schriftstellerverband - the GDR's Writers' Union

SED - Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands - Socialist Unity Party of  
Germany

Theoretical Conference - Theoretische Konferenz - held annually  
during Children's Book Week



## APPENDIX 2:

### TRANSLATIONS OF GERMAN QUOTATIONS USED IN THE THESIS

page	quote no.
i	<p>25th conference of the International Institute for Children's Literature and Reading Research, Krems</p> <p>DAAD - Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst - German Academic Exchange Service</p> <p>Institute for Youth Literature Research, Frankfurt/Main</p> <p>GDR-Centre for Children's Literature, Berlin</p> <p>Bertolt-Brecht-Library, Berlin</p> <p>National Library, Berlin</p>

#### INTRODUCTION

1	1	<p>In the education of our children into young socialists we must see art as a weapon and we would be stupid if we allowed this weapon to rust on the bookshelf. Gerhard Holtz-Baumert, in <i>The Children's Book : Thoughts and Views</i></p>
	2	<p>I am not driven to write through joy at ideal circumstances but through anger at circumstances. This has been the motivating force of authors throughout the ages. Art is criticism. Günter Saalman, 'The Reader wants to read a story, well told...', in <i>Almanac of GDR Children's Literature : Books and Illustrations</i></p>
2	3	<p>The struggle for the education of young people and children in the spirit of Leninism and the struggle for the education of young Soviet workers and farmers in the spirit of internationalism both, in this historic phase, demand strict attention to the literature written for children and young people, the most pointed bolshevik weapon on the ideological front. Communist Party of the Soviet Union, in <i>The Children's Book : Thoughts and Views</i></p>
3	4	<p>Our books should intervene in everyday life and help to reshape it. We want to write books which arouse good and noble feelings in the readers, and which deepen their love and respect for our people and their work.</p>

Our books should lead our young people to independent thought and responsible actions; this seems particularly important since the German people have so often been brought up to obey without questioning. We authors are educators. Particularly we authors who write for children and young people. And, according to Gorki, to educate is to revolutionise.  
 Alex Wedding, in *The Children's Book : Thoughts and Views*

- |   |    |   |
|---|----|---|
| 4 | 5  | In literature many sweet dishes were cooked up while life taught children to live on bread and dripping.<br>Eva Strittmatter, in <i>Contributions to Literature for Children and Young People</i>   |
|   | 6  | With terrible arguments full of morals and politics they dragged me into a meeting ... . The topic of the meeting was the need for well-known authors to write children's books.<br>Fred Rodrian, 'Beginning - balance - tasks'   |
| 5 | 8  | General term for a branch of literature which is relatively independent in bourgeois societies but which in socialist societies is integrated into the national literature.<br><i>Dictionary of Comparative Literature</i>  |
| 7 | 11 | In the committee we wanted an organ to discuss and influence the effects of literature on young readers and thus on the adults of tomorrow. We wanted in various ways to influence and to encourage reading and reading processes.<br>Bruno Haid, in 'Looking back and forward : 20 years of the GDR-Centre for Children's Literature', in <i>Children's Literature-Report</i>  |
| 8 | 12 | The Stasi, which, in the services of the Politburo of the SED, controlled and observed everyone and everything, needed central starting-points for its work. That was the political tendency, and it finally brought about the end of our Association, which was not done away with but which was gradually made redundant by the Committee and the GDR-Centre, called into existence in 1970 by the Ministry for Culture's Department of Publishing.<br>Horst Kunze, Ibid. |
| 9 | 14 | Truth is necessary, but for children not the whole truth, because large doses of this would be fatal for a child.<br>Maxim Gorki, in <i>The Children's Book : Thoughts and Views</i><br><br>Hans Koch's paper 'Fantasy and Reality in Children's Literature'  |

- 10 15 'angry realism', which often arises out of historical shortsightedness and self-centred navel-contemplation.  
Fred Rodrian, 'Questions and Notes on the Situation of Children's Literature (from speech to the publishing advisory committee, November 1977)'
- 11 16 If the object is to produce conformist behaviour, which is often the case, literature has no business there and serves no purpose.  
Everyone is an individual. He must recognise this individuality and the power and talent which he has to perform both the everyday and the unusual tasks which are necessary for himself and for society. He must do these things even if they are painful for him. Or painful for society or for both. Here I see not only a possibility but also a duty of literature.  
Benno Pludra, 'Speech to the plenum at the 10th Writers' Congress : "... The world looks into the child ... and out from us adults..."
- 11 17 To every sociologist or interested foreigner who wants to learn something of our reality, I would first of all recommend our children's literature. Not to simplify matters, but to represent the variety of problems.  
Christel Berger, 'Childhood in books written by GDR authors for child or adult readers'
- 12 18 Who else but an author is more duty-bound to indicate problems which people experience and from which they suffer, and to campaign for these to be overcome.  
Benno Pludra, 'Possibilities and limitations of tolerance'
- 13 20 I feel that the most important things in my life are my parents and our socialist State. Both are bringing me up to be a socialist personality with a secure, bright and happy future.  
Schoolboy, aged 12, in *I get up at 6 o'clock*
- 21 'The portrayal of history and contemporary history in literature for children and young people in the GDR'  
Red Elephant - section Children - Books - Media
- 22 Heinz Kuhnert, 'Attractiveness and Effect : The Children's Book as judged by its Readers' Results 8
- 14 23 The favourite hero is ... the active person, who has to overcome difficulties, often the sole survivor in the battle against other powers.  
Wilfried Bütow, 'On the development of reading interests and reading habits of schoolchildren'
- 14 24 In some individual books, the aim of reaching the adult through the child and through public debate is clearly one of the dominant intentions. The question then

arises as to the nature of children's literature, for the text must be aimed primarily at the child, and preferably written in such a way that the child's existence and view of the world should be enriched by it.

Karin Richter, 'Modelling reality and implying readership : some questions on literature for children and young people and on its theory', in *Scene : Essays on Literature for Children and Young People and on other Artistic Media*

25 'Children's literature in the GDR : facts and figures'

16 Gerhard Holtz-Baumert's paper 'Looking for the parents'

# 1. THE FAMILY

19 'GDR - family-friendly country'

19 1 Above all with the realisation of the sociopolitical programme, increasingly favourable conditions are developing for family life and for the full observance of family responsibility for the education of children. Honecker, quoted in *How should your child be ?*

20 2 If the only moral marriage is one founded on love, then it follows that it only remains moral as long as the love continues to exist. Friedrich Engels, *On the Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State*

3 The family is a natural human community of two partners, which is based on sexual attraction and which encompasses the children who grow up in this community. Anita Grandke, *Encouraging the Family - a task of Society and of the State*

21 4 Release from the obligation to marry in no way detracts from the significance of stable marital partnerships, and society expects of all citizens that they will strive for such relationships as the basis of the family. Ibid.

6 Today Grit is getting married  
Who is she marrying?  
Boyfriend Ben? No, Heiner  
is striding along.

Who took photos of the whole party,  
and wasn't a bit drunk?  
Not me, not you, who then?  
Ben.



Who Grit will certainly  
marry next time around.  
Günter Saalman, *Today Grit is getting married*

22                    ‘Do our children or grandchildren still play “father,  
mother, child”?’  
Wolf Spillner

Brigitte Birnbaum’s *Winter without Dad*

7                    As a reader, you can lose your heart to her.  
‘One fact of life and the children and five books’

23                    8                    Dad disappointed Mum. Chris won’t disappoint Mum.  
*Winter without Dad*

Jens Bahre’s *The Fat Man and Me*

23-24              9                    A pear tree in a garden, fenced in and protected. Like  
the one the Marinettis have.  
But our little nut tree hadn’t had a fence or any daily  
care. It stood there like a dwarf among giants and  
waited for our annual trip to show us how much it had  
grown. And suddenly someone seized it by the leaves  
and pulled it out of the earth, roots and all, and chucked  
it away on a pile of other weeds.  
Jens Bahre, *The Fat Man and Me*

24                    10                   Father had been my best friend. And he’d forgotten me  
just like that. I bet he didn’t know what real friendship  
is.  
Ibid.

Erich Kästner’s *Lottie and Lisa*

11                    “You see, in life, in everyday life, things aren’t quite so  
smooth and harmonious as they sometimes are in  
stories.”  
Jens Bahre, *The Fat Man and Me*

25                    Robert Rosin’s *Janot or My Mother’s Boyfriend*

25-26              13                   In those days I thought - she has me and the memory of  
Dad. She mustn’t allow anyone to force their way  
between us. I thought that Janot, through his  
relationship with my mother, was taking something  
away from me, maybe destroying something. It never  
occurred to me that I was denying her the right to be  
happy or to feel affection for another person. And I  
never thought about the fact that, one day, when I  
could stand on my own two feet and had perhaps found  
a girl, a wife, I would leave her.  
Robert Rosin, *Janot or My Mother’s Boyfriend*

26                    Gunter Preuß’s *The Wooden Cuckoo*

- 14           The wooden cuckoo cried, "Cuckoo, cuckoo...!" It wove the beams of light from the moon and from the stars into a golden swing. Peter sat on it. He swang. Higher and higher. Up to the stars.  
Gunter Preuß, *The Wooden Cuckoo*
- 'Little Trumpeter Books'
- 28           15           Ofen's father took care of everything. His wife, the meals, the younger children. He always had time for guests, but he managed to do other things too - reading the paper, mending broken toys, cleaning his pipe, asking Ofen about school. I'm sure he couldn't make up poetry like my father. And I doubt if he'd ever have thought of a 'dream tree'. But what was really better? Making up poetry or everything that Ofen's dad could do? In any case, Dad's poetry was no good to me now - he wasn't here any more.  
Jens Bahre, *The Fat Man and Me*
- 16           The story of a divorce that doesn't take place.  
Steffen Peltsch, 'One fact of life and the children and five books'
- Barbara Kühl's *False Lights*
- 30           Marga Tschirner's *The New Grandma from Budapest*
- 31           17           smallest social unit of society.  
central link between individual and society.  
*Politico-cultural Dictionary*
- 18           It is the right and the foremost duty of parents to bring their children up to be healthy, cheerful, good and well-educated citizens, aware of their State. Parents are entitled to the close and trusting cooperation of the social and State educational institutions.  
*Constitution of the German Democratic Republic*
- 32           Helmut Stolz's *How should your child be?*  
Roland Rudolf's *By Example and with Love : Advice for Education in the Family*
- 19           Only a functioning family which is fully integrated into society makes possible, with the cooperation of schools and youth organisations, the socialist way of life.  
Christian Emmrich, 'Aesthetic nature and artistic specifications of our children's literature'
- 33           20           Children, born into society without any say in the matter, will feel at home there most quickly if they feel at home with their parents. The parental home is very important, and it is therefore clear that we should search for conflicts from this area for our stories. I say conflicts, because there seems little point in writing

stories where it is soon obvious what will happen.  
Where there is no serious danger, where the happy  
ending is, as it were, programmed.  
Benno Pludra, 'Work and everyday life'

Benno Pludra's *Island of the Swans*

- 33-34      21      They lay the table, they do it together. Afterwards,  
Stefan is called. He washes his hands and comes to the  
table, but he doesn't touch his bread, or the tea, until  
Hermann, his father, says, "I'm sorry, is that what you  
want to hear? Do the drawing again, I don't care, and  
pin it on the noticeboard tomorrow, or pin it there  
tonight. Do what you want for all I care, just stop  
pulling that face. I can't stand you like this."  
"Stop it," says Susanne. "You can't talk to him like  
that."  
"How then? Any other suggestions?" Hermann  
thumps the table. The whole family stares at him, and  
the evening will remain as it is now: no one says  
another word, not even Sabine.  
Benno Pludra, *Island of the Swans*
- 22      "The main thing," she says, "is that we're all together,  
a proper family!"  
Klaus Meyer, *Petroleum Jonny*
- 23      "I've discovered it," says Matze. "It's all down to the  
smell. Ants find their way by sense of smell."  
"Ants!" shouts his father. "Ants! You haven't got  
anything more important to do then? The lawn needs  
mowing. You lot don't notice that. Ants!"  
"I think it's nice that he's made a discovery," says Ilse  
Schütt.  
"He discovered it? Really? Him! Don't you think there  
might already be something about it in some book or  
other?" her husband asks. "Go and look in your smart  
library. Ants!"  
Ilse knows that it is better to keep quiet now, and Matze  
and Jonny know that too.  
Peter Schütt still longs for the sea.  
Ibid.
- 35      Christa Kozik's *The Angel with the Golden Moustache*
- 35-36      24      If parents weren't frequently psychologically without  
instincts, lacking in character and plagued with  
repression, there would not be many children's books  
in this country. ... It would be interesting to see what  
would result from reversing the pattern: clever,  
sensitive, open, communicative and tolerant parents  
versus uncommunicative, recalcitrant, aggressive,  
unintelligent and rough child. ... It could be a laugh.  
Claudia Rouvel, ' "Bon appetit!" Observations on the  
evening meal table in children's books of the eighties',  
in *Conversations on GDR Literature 1985*

- 36-37      25      A family is more than a group of people in a children's home and different from the crew of a spaceship ... grandparents, mother, father, child, brothers and sisters, they are all joined by invisible threads. A tight net, which can provide protection for the youngest and support for the oldest in difficult times.  
Jürgen Leskien, *Georg*
- 37            26      "I'm sure this will sound very philosophical, but, how shall I put this, I really mean it, and the fact that we're sitting here together confirms my thoughts - I believe that, for the individual, the family is the centre of the world. In all important areas. Here," Jan tapped a finger lightly on the table, "here is where he begins his day, and he can come back again and again whenever he wants, whether he has won or lost."  
Ibid.
- 27            27      Kaule pulled their strings and basked in his parents' concern. He didn't care about his mother's tired face or the fact that his father had missed work. With angry pleasure he thought, now they're with me every day.  
Ibid.
- 38            28      "And what will people think of us, of you and me, when they read it?"  
I hesitated for a moment. "Perhaps it will make them more inquisitive, perhaps they will be more careful with each other after they have read it. Perhaps."  
Ibid.
- 29            29      Many potential effects of the book ... can only unfold if it is not only received by the child reader. In this respect, this book, like many other children's books prompts the question of how such works can be presented to the public so that possible reverberations are not lost. In my view we are, at present, a long way from a public reaction to art created for children. However, many children's books contain essential 'messages' for adults and attempt to provoke the latter to consider their behaviour towards the younger generation. It is urgent that we consider how a broad reading public can be won over for such texts.  
Karin Richter, 'Birgit Herkula: "Sometimes I know what's going on", illustrations by Tanja Neljubina; Kinderbuchverlag Berlin 1987'
- 39            30      My father is only there for me. That's why Mum sometimes looks so sad. But she doesn't need to get upset about anything because we protect her from bad things, especially my bad marks. ...  
Whenever I'm in the first row and my Dad drives past with his lorry, he drives very slowly and waves to me and he's happy, and the others say, "You've got a good Dad!"  
Birgit Herkula, *Sometimes I know what's going on*



- 31 I'm inconspicuous; no one notices me.  
My teacher has never let me walk in the first row.  
That's where the strongest children are, and the ones  
with the best marks, the ones with a mum and dad who  
both come to the parents' meetings to protect their  
child.  
I haven't got a dad. But I don't tell anyone that.  
Ibid.
- 40 32 Grown ups should play a lot more. But they never have  
any time. Mainly they don't have time because they  
still have some work to do when they are at home. I  
don't understand how they can enjoy that.  
"You're difficult," my parents sometimes say.  
But you're much more difficult, I sometimes think.  
Ibid.
- 33 "My mum has to go on business trips from the factory,  
and when she's at home, she goes out to look for a  
husband."  
"Love needs time, you have to be patient," I say, like my  
mum used to.  
"I don't want to go home, the television's broken," says  
Ellen.  
Ibid.
- 34 "At home, I'm the man, I chop wood and fetch coal from  
the cellar so that my mum can rest when she gets back  
from work," says Ellen.  
Ibid.
- 35 'functional plan as a sister'  
Ibid.
- 40-41 36 I'm more and more busy being a sister, and less and less  
time is left for me to be a child.  
Ibid.
- 41 37 I feel I have an obligation towards my little sister. I  
must be an example to her and I am.  
Schoolgirl, aged 13, *I get up at 6 o'clock*
- 38 Then I will write about children, so that adults will  
learn that they are not the most important people in  
the world, and so that they can understand us better.  
People will love me.  
Birgit Herkula, *Sometimes I know what's going on*
- 43 40 So begins the unusual story of a boy who has a hard  
time of it in life, who could easily end up on the 'wrong  
track' and who tries to rescue himself. Eventually,  
though, he realises that he needs help - and he gets it.  
Günter Saalman, *Umberto*
- 43-44 41 I feel that it is time for the children's literature of our  
country to stop trying to present children with a

falsely cheerful picture of reality, to stop treating difficult subjects like the famous hot potato which you only get hold of after it has cooled down.  
Günter Saalman, 'Harriet and the Matches - Contribution to the discussion at the Theoretical Conference of the Writer's Union of the GDR on the occasion of the 26th Children's Book Week, 1988'

- |       |    |  |
|-------|----|--|
| 44    | 42 | The connection between the psychosocial misdevelopment of an adolescent and the family situation could hardly be better portrayed.<br>Gunhild Korfes, 'Letter to the editor on the subject of Günter Saalman's book "Umberto"  |
|       | 43 | In my opinion, Günter Saalman is attempting to create a moral category to help us in the struggle against indifference towards such occurrences.<br>Ibid.  |
| 45    | 44 | bright years in Neuensorge<br><i>Umberto</i>   |
| 45-46 | 45 | They are rejected, no one wants them. Instead of really supporting them, we put them in homes. The worst thing, I think, is that Frau Krautwein, knew through her daughter what it was really like in the children's home and still did nothing about it. She must have known that he needed a real home.<br>"He's somehow so alone..." : conversation with David, 13 years old'       |
| 46    | 46 | The foundations for a person's curiosity for life and for their creative fantasy are laid in the family. Serious mistakes in family education, which is essentially spontaneous, can only partly be corrected in other areas of society, through school, apprenticeship, study, work collectives or during conscription.<br>'Everyday life in our children's literature - an overview' |

## 2. WORK

- |    |   |   |
|----|---|---|
| 47 | 1 | A socialist state of workers and farmers, the political organisation of workers in the cities and in the country under the leadership of the working class and their Marxist -Leninist party<br><i>Constitution of the German Democratic Republic</i> |
|    | 2 | the heart of the socialist way of life<br><i>Programme of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany</i>  |
|    | 3 | the honourable duty of every citizen who is capable of working<br><i>Constitution of the German Democratic Republic</i>   |

'Work - vital for life'

- 48        4        Very often they don't survive for long. They turn to heroin, throw themselves off roofs, end up in the underworld, or in prison ... Work is thus truly vital for life. Not only for the historical development of mankind but for every individual the same motto applies: without work you are not a complete person, there is no development of the personality! It is one of the most important human rights!  
Gerhard Neuner, *The Second Birth...*
- 5        Thanks to the various efforts of our society, which takes the welfare of every person seriously, he has found his way in life *via work*.  
Ibid.
- 6        After work and the work collective, the family has the greatest influence on the development of a person.  
Anita Grandke, *The Encouragement of the Family as a task of Society and of the State*
- 7        Katrin Pieper, 'The portrayal of the worker in contemporary socialist fiction for the over-11s'
- 49        8        In socialist realist children's literature too, since it is a part of our national literature and thus subject to the same ethical and aesthetic demands, work is granted the same non-material evaluation and artistic portrayal. Thus socialist children's literature is an essential factor in moulding the socialist character, since it trains children for work, that fundamental component of the socialist consciousness. Through its emotional influence, it helps to anchor this trait in the thoughts and feelings of the child.  
Katrin Pieper, in *The Children's Book: Thoughts and Views*
- Joachim Nowotny's *The Giant in Paradise*
- 9        The worker, work as an essential force for development, for the liberation of the personality, relationships at work, avant-gardists of socialist work as heroes of our time - all of these things must (following the trend established by Neumann and Nowotny and Pludra) be more central and decisive in the literature of the coming years.  
Fred Rodrian, 'Beginning - balance - tasks'
- 50        10       We need books which show the influence of work on the development of the young, their morals, their way of life and their relationships.  
Christian Emmrich, 'Ethical and aesthetic claims of

- socialist society on the literature for children and young people of the future'
- 51      11      Marianne Rautenberg, 'Report on the picture book conference of the Kinderbuchverlag in Weimar, 24-26.5.88: a slice of utopia even in the picture book?'
- 12      I don't like the fact that we indirectly link the fact that parents work with the fact that a lack of time leads to a lack of communication. An issue of quantity is being confused with one of quality - this is neither dialectical nor true. It smells a bit of alienation.  
Steffen Peltsch, 'How do you catch a hero? Thoughts on the choice and portrayal of heroes in the children's literature of 1970 to 1979 (speech at the Theoretical Conference of the Writers' Union of the GDR on the occasion of the Children's Book Week in 1980)'
- Christa Kožik's *Moritz in the Litfaßsäule*  
Barbara Kühl's *Martin or Two Left Hands*  
Jutta Schlott's *Early and Late*
- 52      13      the biggest irrelevance in the world  
Barbara Kühl, *Martin or Two Left Hands*
- 14      like an annoying fly  
Ibid.
- 53      15      Even in socialist society the socialising power of the family is subjugated to the conditions and effects of industrial production. ... In our country too work takes mothers and fathers away from the family, and their activities remain hidden from and alien to the child. But it must also be recognised: that the fathers and mothers of this country are working under socialist production, in the secure knowledge that, through their work, they are building the future for their children. Through the fundamental ideological and political agreement between family consciousness and public consciousness, new powers of socialisation can develop.  
Dietrich Schuckmann, 'The desire and the courage to be yourself and to be different'
- 54      16      My dad always says that if I don't work harder at school, I'll never get a good job and I'll have to be a streetsweeper ... If you're happy doing that, it wouldn't be the worst thing in the world, said the streetsweeper. It doesn't matter what you do, just how you do it, that's what's important, and that you're happy doing it. Whether you're a bank manager like your dad, or whether you sow corn or sweep the street. The main thing is that you're happy and feel that you're needed.  
Christa Kožik, *Moritz in the Litfaßsäule*
- 17      The best thing is when I can sit with my parents at the



- coffee table and we tell each other all the latest news. Unfortunately this doesn't happen often as my parents work shifts.  
Schoolgirl, aged 13, *I get up at 6 o'clock*
- 55      18      open question to society  
Claudia Rouvel, 'Contribution to the discussion at the Theoretical Conference at the 24th Children's Book Week in Neubrandenburg'
- 19      "Sven? You know what? I think shift work is crap!"  
"Why?" Sven pretended he didn't know the answer.  
"Because they're never at home at the same time any more," Olaf explained willingly, "there's always only one of them! When Mum's on late shift, we sometimes don't see her all week ..., only if she looks in when we're having breakfast. And then she's tired and starts moaning ... And at the weekend they want to lie in and have some peace and quiet." ...  
"That's how it is! If they didn't work alternate shifts, there'd be no one here at nights."  
Jutta Schlott, *Early and Late*
- 56      'What must be must be!'
- 20      "So that we see that there are other things apart from work and bags and washing..."  
Jutta Schlott, *Early and Late*
- 21      "On Monday the whole bloody thing's going to start again anyway!"  
Ibid.
- 57      22      "we moved here for you too. So we could get this nice flat. And so we could earn more money. Maybe next year we'll be able to buy a car. Everything we do we do for you too!"  
Ibid.
- 58      23      Man and woman are equal and have equal rights in all areas of social, State and personal life. The encouragement of women particularly to gain qualifications is an important task for society and the State.  
*Constitution of the German Democratic Republic*
- 24      Ludwig Liegle, *Worlds of Childhood and Family : Contributions to Pedagogic Socialisation Research into different Cultures*
- 59      28      to organise their relationship so that both partners can make full use of the right to the full development of their abilities for their own use and for society's.  
*GDR Family Law Book, Ministry of Justice*
- 60      Helmut Stolz *How should your child be?*

- 31 The question arises as to whether authors portray role-behaviour in this way in order to initiate changes in the real world, or whether they follow these patterns themselves.  
Karin Richter, 'Social explorations in literature for children and young people'
- 61 32 These days Mum didn't have much time, because when she got back from work, she was always busy with shopping, cooking, washing up and washing.  
Afterwards she sat at the table surrounded by so many books that you could hardly see her and groaned and tore her hair and murmured, "I'll never understand this."  
Christa Kožik, *Moritz in the Litfaßsäule*
- 33 "We must make more time for the children. For their questions and their wishes. They need that. Especially Moritz. One day I'll maybe take it up again. When they're older."  
Ibid.  
  
Dietmar Beetz' *Family Theatre*
- 62 34 "Are you coming for a cuddle? Please, Mum!"  
"All right. But just for five minutes!"  
Tina kept an eye on the digital clock as she whispered her problems to her mother. Suddenly she stopped.  
Her mother was snoring quietly. She had only been there three minutes and thirty two seconds.  
Dietmar Beetz, *Family Theatre*  
  
'Striker'  
'The Iron Man'  
  
Bernd Wolff's *The Trail of the Beaver*  
  
Jürgen Leskien's *Red Elephants and Green Clouds for Till*
- 63 Arwed Bouvier's *My Very Best Twin Brother*
- 35 "I'm a sailor," said Dad.  
I'd never heard Mum say anything like that: I'm a librarian, or something. She'd probably say she was a sailor's wife. Mum was probably quite proud of being a sailor's wife.  
Arwed Bouvier, *My Very Best Twin Brother*
- 64 36 "Me? Where would I work? You're kidding! I am a brewer. I belong in the brewery, nowhere else. It's different for me. You - you're a woman. Not that that's less than a man. Quite the opposite. You have far more to cope with. That's why you should get an easier job. So you've got time for other things - me and Julia, for example."

- 37 "You know, my girl, there's still a bit of old Adam in us men. In the Bible it says Eve was created from one of his ribs and that he was made her master. What I'm trying to say is - I've come to realise a few things. Your old man's grown a bit wiser, old girl."  
Ibid.
- 65 38 "I don't want you bringing work home!"  
"But you bring work home!" the mother defended herself awkwardly.  
"Really ... Maria! That's completely different! After all, I'm a teacher! Or had that slipped your attention?"  
snapped Gottfried Lembke.  
Barbara Kühl, *Martin or Two Left Hands*
- 39 The lad looks like he's got a guilty conscience again! Gottfried Lembke thought briefly, but in the next moment he had forgotten his son. Cybernetics - a complicated business!  
Ibid.
- 40 Was it right to want to take the language proficiency exam and change horses again at forty five? Am I too ambitious? Am I self-centred? brooded Maria Lembke. Do I just want to fulfil an old dream at any cost?  
Ibid.
- 66 41 I believe that Jutta Schlott has succeeded here in creating a female character who is, in the aesthetic sense, typical of our times.  
Claudia Rouvel, 'Contribution to the discussion...'
- 42 The silent, exhausted or explosive mother at the evening meal table is not a snapshot, but represents a permanent situation. The explosive force of the story is due largely to the complex figure of the mother, which differs significantly from the traditional image of the woman.  
Claudia Rouvel, 'Evening meal tables in GDR children's books: Observations on the image of the family in books of the 1980s'
- 43 When Dad was on early shift, it was much calmer at home. Dad hardly ever told them off.  
Jutta Schlott, *Early and Late*
- 67 44 Without Mum, everything was only half.  
Ibid.
- 45 "I wanted to take my craftsman's diploma. Then Sven came along. And then the children were young! And there was always something! ... I want to start something with my life again too!"  
Ibid.

- 46 "For fourteen years I've been the main one who's looked after the children. Willingly! Understand - *willingly!* ... When you go off to your union classes has anyone ever asked you - what about the children?" "Gerda, you *are* their mother," the father said, irritated.  
"And you?" The mother looked up. Tears were running down her face. "You are their father," she said angrily.  
Ibid.
- 47 a declaration of social responsibility  
Hannelore Hiltzheimer, 'Jutta Schlott: "Early and Late"; the Kinderbuchverlag Berlin 1982'
- 68 48 Both children and parents should read this good book. And not just read it. We must talk about it.  
Ibid.
- 49 As long as society is unable to remove the contradiction by recognising childcare as a profession and paying for it, every family will have to find individual solutions, compromises with differing results.  
However, simply naming the problem is commendable.  
Hannes Hüttner, 'Work and family in literature for children and young people: Speech at the Theoretical Conference of the Writers' Union of the GDR on the occasion of the 24th Children's Book Week of the GDR'
- 50 Allow me to put it crudely: the structure of everyday working life has hardly changed since the foundation of industrial production. Women were slotted into it. Children were eliminated from it.  
Jutta Schlott, 'Contribution to the discussion at the Theoretical Conference of the Writers' Union of the GDR on the occasion of the 24th Children's Book Week/Neubrandenburg'
- 51 Shortly before I came to Neubrandenburg, a young woman whose 'Baby-year' is coming to an end said to me - do you know what I want from the Party Conference - that they ban creches!  
Ibid.
- 69 Wolf Spillner's *Dipper*
- 70 52 The liberation of the family will only be possible when they are largely involved in production and when domestic work only takes up an insignificant proportion of their time.  
Friedrich Engels, *Selected Works*

### 3. INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIETY

- 71 'Which approach to education suits our society?'

- 1 First of all we must remember that the essence of socialism is the creation of conditions which make possible the *free, all-round development of the personality*.  
Gerhard Neuner, *The Second Birth : On Education in Everyday Life*
- 72 2 To educate means to *influence a personality*.  
Ibid.
- 3 As we have made clear, in socialist society there is no basic contradiction between that which is good for the individual and that which benefits society.  
Ibid.
- Roland Rudolf's *By Example and with Love : Advice on Education in the Family*
- 4 Respect for mankind, for life, for work, fulfilment of duties, love of truth, modesty, mutual respect, responsibility as a citizen. The development of such characteristics, typical of communists, is among the goals of education in the parental home.  
Roland Rudolf, *By Example and with Love: ...*
- Anton S. Makarenko, 'On children's literature'
- 72-73 5 These heroes must awaken either positive or negative feelings, one respect, another honour, a third affection, a fourth a cheerful smile, a fifth concern and tenderness, etc. However, all of the feelings aroused must be typical, never exclusively individual. Only a very advanced reader is in the position to enjoy rare individual characteristics which complicate and set apart the image of the personality. Children are not yet capable of this aesthetic appreciation.  
Anton S. Makarenko, 'On children's literature'
- 73 6 Art is a medium of total appreciation. And in this respect it imperceptibly produces social consciousness. Not by having a certain figure at a certain time exclaim: socialism is good, but through taking as read, for example, the relationship between a remarkable person and his normal, but recognisably socialist surroundings.  
Günter Ebert, 'Play and reflection'
- 73-74 7 Obedience and good behaviour are qualities in our children which are desired, expected and rewarded by too many educators, to an extent which is not appropriate to the educational goals of our school system.  
Hans-Dieter Schmidt, 'The image of the child - a norm and its effects', in *New German Literature*
- 74 8 A child should not simply become a follower of rules, it



- must also learn to evaluate norms critically.  
Hannes Hüttner, 'Work and family in literature for children and young people'
- 9           The process of the second birth is never complete, but largely over when the child has internalised the system of social rules and demands as its own conscience.  
Ibid.
- 75       11       Behind all of these changes lies the intention of the authors to encourage engagement in their readers and the development of an active attitude to life, on the basis of which major problems will be solved by the young generation.  
Karin Richter, 'Social explorations in literature for children and young people'
- 76       Jutta Schlott's *The Special Case*
- 77       12       "But the boy needs his home too, he can't cope on his own," his mother objected.  
"The boy is mentally deficient!" the teacher retorted loudly. "It's time you learnt to live with the idea. And he *must* go to a special school."  
Jutta Schlott *The Special Case: a Story with a Happy Ending*
- 13       He belonged to Zarrien like the church in the middle of the village, like the apple trees in the orchards.  
Ibid.
- 14       Special cases as fictionally heightened examples of the way we treat each other in our society.  
Claudia Rouvel, 'As writers we must also formulate what is kept silent...: Interview with Martin Meißner'
- 78       Martin Meißner's *Flame Bird*  
Martin Meißner's *The Flute with the Magic Sound*
- 15       These are models which I portray, slightly utopian provinces.  
Martin Meißner, in 'As writers we must formulate what is kept silent...: Interview with Martin Meißner'
- 16       If people are related to animals, thought Henrik, this bird could be my brother.  
Martin Meißner, *Flame Bird*
- 78-79   17       Henrik was sure that he was witnessing their first flight. You took your time, he thought. You are like your father. You had his patience. You could wait. You only left the nest when you felt that you had the strength to fly like your parents.  
Ibid.
- 79       18       It's an open challenge to society. Of course the

strength of my characters lies in the fact that they make demands of society. They can't cope on their own. They need others to help them. The question is whether society will succeed in helping them through or not.

Martin Meißner, 'As writers...'

19 At times it reads like a report on the fate of special-school pupils.

Claudia Rouvel, *Ibid.*

79-80 20 One girl was always there. Henrik knew her. She cleared away the empty glasses and the dirty plates from the tables outside the tourist cafe. She always did it very hesitantly. She never looked at the customers. She never said a word. Here in the band she was a changed person. She was striding along the road and laughing with the lookers-on.

Martin Meißner, *Flame Bird*

80 21 I don't know if literature is allowed to do this or not, but I wanted to fulfil a bit of a mission here. I wanted to say - look here, great bloke.

Martin Meißner, 'As writers...'

'The shouter of Besenau'

81 Sebastian is small, round, scared of water, and rather nervous. When things get bad, he likes to hide and wait till it's all over.

Martin Meißner, *The Flute with the Magic Sound*

82 22 If, for example, a kindergarten teacher reads *The flute with the magic sound* and thinks about it, then I've achieved something with my literature if she allows the 'Bummelletzten' (those who dawdle along behind) to be themselves. I don't think I could achieve more than that. Or - since I write for children - if a future kindergarten teacher still had this feeling for the 'Bummelletzten' in 15 years' time, that would be nice. Paragraphs and educational plans do not exclude warm-heartedness. I'm all for making the best of the structures we have.

Martin Meißner, 'As writers...'

82-83 23 "I learnt at college that you only encourage children by presenting them with challenges, so that they learn that you have to make an effort in life. I think Sebastian likes coming to see you in the kitchen, because you don't ask him to do anything he's not very good at."

"You mustn't forget that every child is different," Hilda replied.

Martin Meißner, *The Flute with the Magic Sound*

83 24 "For my part, I believe that the two brothers in the

mountain had more patience than it says in the story. And above all they had more confidence in their brother. So the third brother was able to complete his work in peace. Perhaps he didn't understand anything about his craft and had never yet managed to make a single flute. But his brothers' faith in him gave him the strength and the skill."  
Ibid.

- 84      25      Every absolute opposition between socialisation and the development on individuality which results from a strong 'accentuation of the individual' over the collective or society, leads to the reduction and weakening of human individuality. It isolates the individual, preventing him from realising the possibility of an active and creative relationship with society which would enrich his individuality. Dietrich Schuckmann, 'The desire and courage to be oneself and to be different'
- Hans-Ulrich Lüdemann's *Me - then a long pause*
- 26      My principle is - ME, in capital letters, then a long pause. And then, further away, the others.  
Hans-Ulrich Lüdemann's *Me - then a long pause*
- 85      27      I suddenly feel sick. But it's not just the excitement. I'm disgusted at Bärbel Fielow. I've never felt that before. A terrible feeling. I'm not even worth as much as these boards here. At least the builders use them for their work. They're useful. But me?  
Ibid.
- 28      I promise to make better use of my time in the future. Not just till I've finished school. Afterwards too. Like this comrade does.  
Ibid.
- 29      It's an adult world full of laws and regulations, which children are forced to adhere to, often with damaging results for their personal development. Of course parents must offer their children a world; but the more complete and finished the world we present them, the less interest they will have in it.  
Gunter Preuß, 'Contribution to the discussion at the Theoretical Conference at the 24th Children's Book Week/Neubrandenburg'
- 86      30      Unconditional obedience and cold authority are no longer the poles of the relationship between children and adults. The relationship is increasingly based on partnership to which each makes a contribution, in which there is no longer a giver and a taker, but both are givers. Education is not simply the handing on of facts which have been learned, it is also a mutual learning process.

Regina Scheer, 'Learning from children: 1979 Year of the Child'

Christa Kozik's *The Angel with the Golden Moustache*

87

Gunter Preuß's *Fairies don't die*

- 31 She imagined Fräulein Rosen as a living traffic light and the boys and girls of 8b as cars standing on both sides of the crossroads. She turned on the red and green lights randomly. The cars sped off, racing nearer and nearer to the middle of the crossroads, and to each other ... Any minute now they would crash...!  
Gunter Preuß, *Julia*

88

- 32 "Most of them are nothing, clockwork toys who won't move till you wind them up."  
Ibid.

- 33 "You can't rely on the masses."  
Ibid.

- 34 "Listen, Luise, everyone needs goals in life. And in order to achieve these, you need guidelines. To show you the way, you understand. ... Someone who knows the score. Who's strong. And has courage. Someone you can always rely on, who always know what to do..."  
"You taught me yourself that there is no God," I said. I wanted to rebel against it all. Herr Brendel was offering me back my old world with its benevolent gods. That world where everything was wonderful and good. ... But I would have had to give up by new self to accept it. ... My mind would no longer have belonged to me.  
Gunter Preuß, *Fairies don't die*

89

- 35 "It's better to get 0 out of 10 in maths than in life."  
Ibid.

- 36 School should give children the courage to doubt, create restlessness, teach pupils to question, so that the conflict of pubescent feelings and fickle views will result in a solid character.  
Gunter Preuß, 'Contribution to the discussion...'

Gunter Preuß' *Annabella and the Great Magician*

- 37 Why do I ask why?  
Whoever doesn't ask why  
must be stupid.  
Why does it say on the GREAT MAGICIAN's house  
whoever doesn't jump in  
will have to stay outside.  
Gunter Preuß, *Annabella and the Great Magician*

90

- 38 She wanted to dance, jump, fly, walk on her hands, stick

her nose in the air, take part in a spitting contest, climb mountains, swim through the seas and leap about on the moon. Above all, she wanted to ask why without driving anyone to despair.  
Ibid.

39 "At school the teacher says what's what."  
Ibid.

40 Their eyes shone. They laughed happily.  
Ibid.

41 "Whoever loves someone asks about them. As long as he loves, he never stops doing that."  
Gunter Preuß, *Fairies don't die*

91 42 The Why went to and fro between them. It made a good, strong bridge which they walked across towards each other.  
Gunter Preuß, *Annabella and the Great Magician*

91-92 43 "I'm training myself not to need any sleep. I don't want to end up as one of those people who always talk about their dreams. I want to experience life."  
"Yes," I said. "Me too. And I don't care how mad it is. Would you like to be fired off in a rocket to a distant star?"  
"Any time. But no one ever comes and wants anything of me. School, school, school. And it's no different when you leave. But somehow I'll make something happen."  
Gunter Preuß, *Fairies don't die*

92 44 Fräulein Schulze is right: when adults ask a question, they just want to hear their own answer. They want their world to be as strong and secure as a castle. But it doesn't seem to be that strong and secure, otherwise they wouldn't be so scared when someone as weak as me rattles at it. And I must have rattled at it, or they wouldn't all be against me.  
Ibid.

45 According to the structure and development of the plot, the most likely prognosis is that she will always be one of life's unpleasant, grumbling types, at odds with herself and the world.  
Konrad Müller, 'Gunter Preuß: "Fairies don't die", illustrations by Christa Unzner-Fischer, the Kinderbuchverlag Berlin 1985. "Annabella and the Great Magician", illustrations by Karl-Heinz Appelmann, the Kinderbuchverlag Berlin 1986'

92-93 46 The Müllers live in the west of the city, where factories crowd together and the chimneys fill the air with sulphur-yellow smoke. The old house is on a main street, and trams and cars drive past day and night. The



- pavements are lined with a few lime trees, whose leaves aren't green but grey.  
Gunter Preuß, *Annabella and the Great Magician*
- 93      47      She said, "And there I was, thinking no one wanted to know anything about me or ask me anything any more. Then along you came with your Why."  
Ibid.
- 94      48      "Call yourself a communist, Leißner! What do you do about it, eh? We risked our lives for it, and not just once, I can tell you that, you baby! And what do you lot do? You think as long as you fulfil your economic plan everything's fine, that's what you think. The capitalist is a wolf, and wolves must be killed! And you lot - you negotiate with him. Peaceful co-existence they call it. And don't try and tell me Lenin said that! Lenin was a fighter of the old guard, not one of these newfangled negotiators!"  
Julia liked to see her grandfather so worked up and impatient.  
Gunter Preuß, *Julia*
- 49      What waits for you will be very similar to this evening. It will be a battle for the happiness of the world. But you are already in the thick of this battle. That makes me calmer. That makes it all easier. That's why I think this evening is all right."  
Ibid.
- 95      50      Only people who can't leave life alone should write.  
Gunter Preuß, in 'Interview with Gunter Preuß, winner of the 1986 Alex-Wedding-Prize'
- 51      He greeted every passer-by - just like people used to in Groß-Vierfelde. But there were a lot of people in the street. And they were all in a hurry. And they probably didn't hear him saying hello.  
Alfred Wellm, *Karlchen Duckdich*
- 52      Sometimes they came across an unexpected patch of grass next to the road. And in the middle of the grass there would be a tree. Or there would be four trees. But you weren't allowed on the grass. And you weren't allowed on the flower beds, even though there weren't any fences.  
Ibid.
- 96      53      And I've already made friends with the children here. And we play together. Or I tell them about Groß-Vierfelde. ... And we often play catch with the other children. That's fun too. Or we play hide-and-seek with the children. Or we play..."  
Ibid.
- 54      'GDR - the land where children are happy'

- 55            It's a normality which we tolerate. I wanted to write a book as a protest against that.  
Alfred Wellm, in 'Social explorations in children's literature'
- 97            56        The poetic concept which most children's books this year reflect serves to activate the inner strengths of the reader and makes him aware of his individual responsibility for the progress of social processes in his own country and for the solution of the important questions of humanity.  
Karin Richter, 'Childish expectations and literary offerings. On new publications of the Kinderbuchverlag Berlin'

#### 4. SOCIALISATION THROUGH FANTASY

- 98            Christa Kozik's *The Angel with the Golden Moustache*
- 98-99        1            a narrow, misconstrued concept of reality  
Christian Emmrich, 'Prose literature for children'
- 99            2            Socialism needs art which is based firmly in reality, and which sets out to explore this reality and its future possibilities.  
Kurt Hager, 'On questions of cultural policy'
- Hans Koch's paper 'Fantasy and reality in children's literature'
- Peter Hacks' *A Fairytale for Claudia's Doll*
- 100          3            *Once there was a little schoolgirl. Her father was the blacksmith in the village of Dümde.*  
- A schoolgirl? asks Claudia.  
- Yes, of course.  
- I thought she was a princess.  
- But she can't be. Her father was the blacksmith.  
- She must be, says Claudia. My doll thinks being a princess is the best job there is.  
- All right. But she has to go to school.  
Peter Hacks, *Meta Morfoß and A Fairytale for Claudia's Doll*
- 4            *And there she saw a man working away at the central heating.*  
- Aha, says Claudia. The prince.  
- I really don't think so. He's not that young any more and he's wearing cheap clothes covered in oil stains.  
- I see, says Claudia. The swineherd.  
Ibid.
- 5            a very ugly story  
Ibid.

- 6           - But my story is true.  
               - My story is a fairytale, says Claudia, and I think it's  
               true enough.  
               Then she adds:  
               Easily as true as yours.  
               And then:  
               Just as true, but much, much nicer.  
               Ibid.
- 101           'TODAYLAND'
- 7           When I'm writing for children, I mustn't create a world  
               for them which distances them in their thoughts and  
               emotions from our own world. No matter how  
               fantastical the story, and no matter which planet it is  
               set on, it must help children to discover 'our world', to  
               understand it and to accept their role in it.  
               Gunter Preuß, in 'Interview with Gunter Preuß: 1986  
               Alex-Wedding-Prize winner'
- Waldemar Spender's *How Filip Treumel invented a  
               Friend*  
               Peter Abraham's *The School Ghost*  
               Benno Pludra's *The Heart of the Pirate*
- 102         8           The girl with the blue ribbon looked at herself in the  
               mirror too and cried, "Oh! What a sweet, well-behaved,  
               hard-working, clever, clean girl I am!"  
               Peter Abraham, *The School Ghost*
- 9           "For once we'll let you watch the crime series tonight,  
               because you got such good marks today and because  
               tomorrow's the school trip."  
               "Oh, no," said the girl, "It would be educationally  
               unsound of you to allow a child of my age to watch the  
               crime series. I'm going to bed. That's much better for  
               me."  
               Ibid.
- 103         10          They were very clever, the people who thought out this  
               town. Neustadt has wide streets lined with young trees,  
               it has supermarkets, creches, kindergartens and  
               schools, it has flower beds, covered walkways and  
               playgrounds. And a children's library with a nice  
               librarian. Neustadt really has everything you'd ever  
               need in life.  
               Waldemar Spender, *How Filip Treumel invented a  
               Friend*
- 11          Even his lovely new room began to seem so complete  
               and ready-made that Filip didn't really feel at home  
               there any more.  
               Ibid.
- 104         12          Filip found it so difficult to hide his disappointment that  
               even his father noticed it.

"A boy who's nine years old," he said, "a designer of the future - almost an adult - doesn't play with teddy bears any more!"  
Ibid.

104-105    13        "This is our town," says Filip. And as soon as he's said it, he thinks of his parents and realises that it wasn't really right. "And a town for the adults," he tries to add, "a town in which young and old can and must get along together." But the second half of his speech is drowned out by the general noise.  
"This is our town," the children shout as they leap up and down.  
"You understood me, my son," Maxim manages to whisper to Filip.  
Ibid.

105        14        "This town is indeed your town. But to take possession of it means to take care of it, and make it more open and friendly for everyone."  
Ibid.

107        15        Now the leaves on the lime tree were yellow and limp. They quivered in the slightest breeze. It looked as if they were shivering or as if they were excited. And old Father Maple rustled every now and then in a dignified way. She was sure he was saying something calming and wise to the little one. His leaves were already yellow too. But in his long tree life he had survived many autumn storms and many winters and he wasn't afraid any more. As Maxi watched the two trees, it seemed to her that the branches of the lime tree weren't quivering any more. Perhaps the words of the big maple had made the little lime tree brave; his branches sheltered her all winter like a roof. What a shame, thought Maxi, that I'm not a lime tree under a maple like that.

Gerti Tetzner, *Maxi*

16        Each Jacqueline-day was long and strenuous and her time was strictly regulated: every morning deep breathing and arm circling and touching her toes while her father counted..., copying from the school blackboard and doing sums and learning key sentences..., swimming and swimming and swimming..., back home writing and doing more sums and learning for tests..., watching a bit of television or playing hide-and-seek..., packing her school bag and cleaning her shoes and having it all checked by her father ...  
Every day was like yesterday and like tomorrow.  
Ibid.

17        If no one tells me that what I've done is good or bad, I don't know what's right or wrong any more. Why am I only calm and content when someone praises me?  
Ibid.

- 108      18      She desperately needed to talk to someone.  
But who would listen?  
Her dad's jacket wasn't hanging on its peg in the  
corridor.  
Two plates were missing from the dinner table.  
Ibid.
- 108-109    19      This is exactly what Gerti Tetzner intended in her  
novel: not to provide easy solutions or clear ideals, but  
to give people the courage to question decisions and to  
live a conscious, self-determined life. She feels that too  
much is automatic and does not touch the  
consciousness. Whoever differs from the norm is made  
to feel an alien within society. Gerti Tetzner is not  
criticising the foundations of the State but an  
overwhelming conformity.  
Christel Hildebrandt, *Twelve Writing Women in the  
GDR: On Writing Conditions for Female Authors in the  
GDR during the 1970s*
- 109      20      Why should she have to become something? Was she  
nothing now? She was a girl who could swim and act,  
sell onion slicers, look after dogs, row, fry sausages,  
announce tram stops, and perhaps do a few more things  
besides. Admittedly, she wasn't the prettiest girl, and  
she couldn't write particularly well or learn things by  
heart, and she'd probably never get the best marks.  
But did that mean she was nothing, that she had to  
become something?  
Gerti Tetzner, *Maxi*
- 110      21      You can tell that the girl, Maxi, *will* become something  
(her mother always claims the reverse).  
However, I think that pupils in years 2-4 would have  
difficulty in recognising this essential message.  
Girl, aged 15, in 'Gerti Tetzner: "Maxi", the  
Kinderbuchverlag Berlin'
- 22      Now it will be a while before she comes. Either in the  
middle of the night or very early in the morning. And  
then she'll just come to change her clothes, and she'll  
rush off to the chicken farm; because she has to be on  
time for the hens. They want their food, they need  
water and they are used to order and can't look after  
themselves. But Jessi can.  
Benno Pludra, *The Heart of the Pirate*
- 110-111    23      "In the olden days," says Tine, "they'd've burned  
people like you...."  
...  
She narrows her eyes and that means she's going to say  
something very bad, perhaps the worst that there is,  
and Tine says, "It's all because you haven't got a dad.  
Because you haven't got one. Haven't even seen him,  
not even that. That's why you're so attached to that  
stone." She bends forward a little with her eyes wide



open now and bright. "Am I right? It's all because you haven't got a father and your mother hasn't got a husband. The two of you are like a dog without a tail." "Who says that?" asks Jessi, but so quietly that she can hardly hear it herself, and Tine says, "Everyone does." Ibid.

- 112      26      As I see it, this last occurrence documents vividly the fact that the concrete, often hard reality of her life *must* catch up with and destroy Jessi's beautiful, secretive fiction surrounding the pirate's heart. Hans-Dieter Schmidt, "The Heart of the Pirate" by Benno Pludra (For and Against)
- 'German Prize for Youth Literature'
- 112-113    27      A children's book should be written in such a way that it can be read by young and old with the same pleasure and gain. Benno Pludra, in *The Children's Book : Thoughts and Views*
- 113      28      Young readers will perhaps be more captivated by the fairytale, fantasy elements, while older readers will be moved by the fate of the child. Christian Emmrich, "The Heart of the Pirate" by Benno Pludra (For and Against)
- 29      Told in this way, there is not much to the fable. I think the reason, above all, is that two completely different things are linked together here - a fairytale and a very contemporary problem. But the fairytale has no relationship to the mini-family, of which Jessi makes up half, and can contribute nothing to the question of how they can become a complete threesome again. Konrad Müller, 'Benno Pludra: "The Heart of the Pirate", illustrations by Gerhard Großmann; the Kinderbuchverlag Berlin 1985'
- 114      30      The time for fairytales is past and the fanciful longing for a father is gone - the decisive rejection of an illusion and a considerable gain in reality! Ibid.
- 114-115    32      Christa Kozik has here written us a beautiful, thoroughly successful, comic yet serious, charming book. Marianne Krumrey, 'Christa Kozik: "The Angel with the Golden Moustache" the Kinderbuchverlag Berlin 1983'
- 115      33      My main concern is to write in a real-fantastical way, linking problems of our everyday life with a superstructure of fantastical elements, which still constantly affect this reality. Fantasy is not the opposite of reality! Fantasy, as you can read in Marx, transcends reality in order to penetrate it more deeply.

The source of fantasy will always be reality.  
Christa Kozik, in 'A message in a bottle thrown into the sea ...: Conversation with Christa Kozik'

- 34 Papa Karl scratched his head and posed a difficult question for that time in the morning - "Are angels allies of the working class?"  
Christa Kozik, *The Angel with the Golden Moustache*
- 115-116 35 On the box containing the golden Christmas angels with their wax faces and angel hair was a label which read 'Winged figures for the New Year'. "There you have it in black and white," Papa Karl laughed to Mum. "You just have to find the right words and you can find a place for everything."  
Ibid.
- 116 36 People were very happy when they met the angel in the corridor. It was a heavenly diversion, because it can often be very monotonous in blocks of flats, since most people close their doors quickly behind them.  
Ibid.
- 117 37 I like the tolerance the author shows towards Christian belief. The teacher, Herr Becher, does not interrupt Ambrosius or force him to recognise things he does not want to recognise, and Ambrosius is not offended when some people laugh at his theories. Christa Kozik is so sure of the convincing power of the materialist viewpoint that she introduces it without forcing it and finds it unnecessary to make room for it by banning or punishing Christian belief.  
Marianne Krumrey, 'Christa Kozik...'
- 38 "We want what's best for you, Lilli. Look and angel like that, he's not the right company for you. He has a different view of the world. I'm sure you understand that."  
Christa Kozik, *The Angel with the Golden Moustache*
- 118 39 When you're flying, you're really free.  
Ibid.
- 40 "Flying is part of me. Do you understand me?"  
Lilli shook her head. "No. And I don't want to either."  
Ibid.
- 41 And Lilli has to cope with this pain all alone.  
Ibid.
- 42 Our socialist education system is praiseworthy. Our society is a child-friendly society. But several of my own experiences have made it painfully clear to me that a proportion of our children are conscientious, well-behaved, clever, but somewhat 'tamed'. They conform to norms too lightly, their mental flexibility

and independent thought leave a lot to be desired. If we constantly force them into a net of dependence, they become passive and unequipped for life. And responsibility must be handed on from one generation to the next like a baton...

Christa Kozik, in 'A message in a bottle...'

- 118-119 43 Lilli was popular with her class because she had a big mouth, that is she always said what she really thought. She dared to be critical when she didn't like things at school, like the fact that the only music lesson in the week was always last lesson, when everyone was already falling asleep or the fact that they weren't allowed to run in the school yard, only walk slowly like grannies and grandads.  
Christa Kozik, *The Angel with the Golden Moustache*
- 119 44 I don't dare. In books it always seems so easy, but it's hardly ever like that.  
Schoolgirl, aged 13, in 'From a questionnaire carried out among years 5 to 9 on Christa Kozik's "The Angel with the Golden Moustache"'
- 45 Mostly I voice my opinions as openly as Lilli does. But if you have problems at our school, everyone ignores you. Above all, suggestions that don't come via the official student council are rejected. I don't think that's right.  
Schoolgirl, aged 10, Ibid.
- 46 However, we cannot be satisfied with the result that only about a third of those questioned felt able to give their opinions without limitation. Yet further motivation for all those who play their part in the development of the child's personality, we children's librarians included, to give children courage and to enable them to find their stance and to discuss their problems.  
Renate Kraft, Ibid.
- 120 47 In my stories, harmony must reign at the end, it must all develop so that you aren't left with the strings cut through. We can't expect children to cope with despair. That's what I think. Of course death and parting play a role, but at the end of a children's book there must be hope, at least a glimmer of it.  
Christa Kozik, in 'A message in a bottle...'
- 120-121 49 I want to tell stories in a real-fantastical way because that is how children think and feel. They are at home in the wonderland of fantasy. Adults don't have to keep telling children where the borders with reality are: children know that very well.  
Christa Kozik, in 'Real and fantastical: conversation with Christa Kozik'

- 121      50      Too often the recognition that the beautiful fantasy and the charming ideal are over is shown too one-sidedly to lead to the limitation of demands. As important as the portrayal by children's authors of the rejection of impossible and deceptive ideals is, the constant portrayal of the consolation prize of 'lesser happiness' is unsatisfactory.  
Karin Richter "The Heart of the Pirate" by Benno Pludra (for and against)

## 5. THE FASCIST PAST

- 123      1      Our socialist children's and youth literature has broken with all taboos which could stand in the way of a realistic portrayal of life.  
Christian Emmrich, 'Aesthetic essence and cultural specifics of our children's literature'
- 124      Heinrich Hoffmann's 'Harriet and the Matches' (title of Günter Saalman's speech)  
  
Benno Pludra's *The Boys from Tent 13*
- 125      3      Uwe Frank, 'The struggle against imperialism, war and fascism in the GDR'
- 126      4      You should make children aware that many of the pleasant sides of life in our society were fought for and achieved through the sacrifices of the older generation.  
Roland Rudolf, *By Example and with Love: Advice on Education in the Family*
- 5      Respect what your forefathers created and achieved! Make children aware of the great moments in the history of our people!  
Helmut Stolz, *How should your child be?*  
  
'destroyed by Anglo-American bombing'
- 127      6      The less they take in the hideousness of the past and of the present, the healthier, brighter and more sensible will be their future, and the sooner it will dawn.  
Maxim Gorki, *On Children's Literature*  
  
Helga Gottschlich's *When the Fascists came to Power*
- 127-128      7      Children are told at an early age that the life they have is one which earlier generations dreamt of, one for which people died, a life free from hunger and war. No one will question how important it is to teach them of this, to make them aware of where we came from. However, we must realise this: what fathers and grandfathers built up with many sacrifices and much

hard work, children - perhaps fortunately - see as a normal part of their everyday lives. They see no grounds for gratitude, especially when they are constantly told how grateful they should be. Their dreams follow a different road, and they always experience happiness in ways which we had not expected. In reality they are handed nothing on a plate, for every day they begin demands their full commitment, even from the youngest. Benno Pludra, 'Where one story ends, the next one begins'

- 129                    Horst Beseler's *Flying to Havana*
- 8                    stupid flower-watering  
Horst Beseler, *Flying to Havana*
- 130                  9                    Asked? What are you supposed to ask someone you see every day? About the fact that Herr Engelke had been a comrade for decades? Or that he'd fought against the Nazis? We knew that. But why had we allowed ourselves to be satisfied with that and not wanted to know more?  
Ibid.
- 10                    Now, because of this simple tool box, I began to understand that Herr Engelke's life had always been like this: he had always wanted to help. Then, it had been the fight against the Fascists. Now, he was an invalid and a pensioner, but you always saw him about with his tool box on the way to help out. That's probably why he took nothing for his repairs too. Just a donation - for solidarity or for Vietnam.  
Ibid.
- 131                  11                    Glucke Hampel put down the spanner and said, hesitatingly, "I'll tell you what's dead good. The way they all belong together - Herr Engelke and the Soviet and the ones he's jetting off from Schönefeld to see in Havana. They belong together - like it was nothing special. Sort of - inside. As if one of us was heading down the side road to visit one of the others and then to see another mate a few blocks away. They're all in the same class, it's just that they live in such different places!"  
Ibid.
- 132                  12                    I close my eyes. Let me think: Sergei Pavlovich's promise works against his own friends. Rita, for example. She'd like to talk to him, about his country. But Sergei Pavlovich pretends he can't understand. It's not Rita's fault that those things happened in 1945, is it? When Sasha was killed. She can't change it. So the promise is unjust towards Rita. Maybe if Sergei Pavlovich had said he wouldn't speak German with Fascists any more, and I know there are still German



- Fascists ...  
Hans-Ulrich Lüdemann, *Me - then a long pause*
- 132-133    13    This is holy ground. Because people like this unknown person died here. And because someone still brings him carnations. In his memory. Because of his sacrifice, we have the life we have today.  
Ibid.
- 133                    Marga Tschirner's *The New Grandma from Budapest*
- 14    other Germans  
                         Marga Tschirner, *The New Grandma from Budapest*
- 15    Well, this GDR, this country is not bad ... You can live there ... She doesn't feel that terrible unease any more.  
Ibid.
- 134                    Gunter Preuß' *Come over the Bridge*
- 16    "Tadeusz was big and strong as a bear. And he played the harmonica like no one for miles around could. Then the War came. Tadeusz was young, almost a child. The Germans brought this War to us. They killed Tadeusz. I have not forgotten that."  
Gunter Preuß, *Come over the Bridge*
- 17    "Stay away from the German boy." There is something warning and threatening in his voice.  
Ibid.
- 135                    18    The new flat welcomes Witek cheerfully. He walks through all the rooms. "Forget," it tells him. "You'll like it here."  
Ibid.
- Brigitte Birnbaum's *The Seven Day Diary*
- 19    the blackest day of my life  
                         Brigitte Birnbaum, *The Seven Day Diary*
- 20    According to Dad's stories, grandpa fell in Russia. As a hero.  
Ibid.
- 136                    21    Dad had been in the FDJ. Not out of conviction, he just wanted a quiet life.  
Ibid.
- Jürgen Jankofsky's *One Monday in October*
- 137                    22    There, there were Italians, Dutch, Danes and French, but held under far better conditions. They occasionally got special rations like jam and tobacco and wine. Yes, they were also paid a small wage. They were even allowed out now and again.

- 23            "The blond fellow managed to get out to the West in time," said her grandfather. "As far as I know, he turned up in the Ruhr area somewhere. The prosecution documents were sent to the responsible court there. But what became of it..."  
Ibid.
- 138        24            an utter failure of poetic intentions  
Karin Richter, 'Social explorations in children's and youth literature'
- 138-139   25            It's surprising that I originally intended the material of this book for adults. But the theme of a thirty year old discovering his relationship to the past is not relevant to children. During my first attempts at writing, I noticed that the real issue - understanding fascism in its entirety - is extremely important for children, and I wanted to establish a dialogue with them about this.  
Jürgen Jankofsky, in 'Conversation with Miriam Margraf, Reinhard Griebner and Jürgen Jankofsky'
- 139        26            While the pictures were being passed round, Herr Gröger said that a lot of people today, not just Doreen, thought they already knew everything about the Nazi years, that it was over, nothing to do with us any more, boring. But he thought that there was still a lot to discover and to understand ... They must learn to understand the people who had lived at that time, and their behaviour. Only in this way could they understand how it had all been possible and perhaps help to eliminate the possibility of anything worse.  
Jürgen Jankofsky, *One Monday in October*
- 139-140   27            Such fanaticism was clearly infectious...  
Ibid.
- 140                    Horst Beseler's *The Long Shadow*
- 141        28            Confused, he asked himself why they were still arguing about this stupid string of names with its Prussian connotations: a kaiser, a flute-playing, cannon-shooting king, a moustachioed field marshal of more recent times, i.e. Paul. And then the deceased cabinet minister, whose name was shortened to "Linne".  
His uncle couldn't do anything about it.  
Horst Beseler, *The Long Shadow*
- 29                    "You should take an example from this uncle of yours. Reliability, hard work, trust ..."  
Ibid.
- 30                    "...is there any particular reason why you're so attached to this uncle of yours?"

- “Because he’s not always claiming to know better. And because he’s always very open and doesn’t keep secrets. Linne would never leave you on your own. I could always talk to him about everything.”  
Ibid.
- 142      31      Nothing is excused.  
But talking about it all with the help of this story by Beseler is very valuable for our understanding of history.  
Rulo Melchert, ‘Horst Beseler: “The Long Shadow”, illustrations by Gerhard Lahr; the Kinderbuchverlag Berlin 1988’
- 143      Günter Görlich’s *The Unknown Grandfather*
- 144      32      There was little about that in their school books, just half sentences, because they all concentrated on the reconstruction at the end of the War and the important political work of the comrades. There was hardly anything about the war after the War and nothing about the people who tore the rats from the dead bodies of their neighbours.  
But why had Jonischkan been a member of the troop which searched for bodies? Why him?  
Why hadn’t Jonischkan been an Activist of the First Hour?  
Jürgen Leskien, *Georg*
- 33      “You? You were? What, you?”  
“A Nazi, that’s what you mean, isn’t it?”  
Georg howled. “You, why you, you were one of the workers!”  
Ibid.
- 145      34      “The whole country knew about it. Not just the members of the Nazi Party. Everyone. All the people who are grandfathers and grandmothers today.”  
Ibid.
- 146      35      “I know Jan.” The old man pulled himself together and was now speaking with a calm, insistent voice. “Years ago, when he first came to see your parents, he stood next to my work bench in the courtyard and watched me filing a key. He stood there a long time and then said - nice work. And then - you’ve always done it, have you? Yes, I said, always. Under Hitler as well, he asked. Yes, under Hitler as well, I answered lightly. He spat and walked away, over to your house. That was thirty years after the War. I’d thought that everything would soon be forgotten. But that afternoon, I spoke to your mother for a while and I understood that I would never be able to forget - that would be too easy.”  
Ibid.
- 36      Hadn’t Jonischkan dug out dead bodies? And lugged

stones for the new houses for years? Hadn't each stone carried away a little of his mountain of guilt? Hadn't he become someone else, in Alfred's brigade, living next door to the Warmbrots?  
Ibid.

- 147      37      The three stories make considerable demands on their readers, since they do not portray the historic correlation of the events of 1933-1945, but instead accept knowledge of these events as a prerequisite. Pre- and metacommunication, above all supported and directed by teachers and librarians, is therefore advisable in reading these titles.  
Christa Jauch, 'Tendencies in the portrayal of the fascist past in GDR prose works for adults and children. Contribution - in thesis form - to the discussion'

## 6. NATIONAL STEREOTYPES

- 148      1      Finding oneself at a turning point first of all involves looking back critically. In our libraries, schools, creches and children's rooms there is a lot of children's literature and youth literature. This must be reviewed without prejudice, and the valuable must be sorted from the unsatisfactory. We suggest as a starting point those works containing images of enemies and of dubious heroism.  
GDR-Centre for Children's Literature, 'Let's not allow our children to fall between the lines! A statement by the GDR-Centre for Children's Literature'
- 149           Gaidar's *Timur and his Troop*
- 2      Those people who have been liberated and those who are fighting for their freedom form a powerful anti-imperialist and revolutionary force in our time. This is why the Socialist Unity Party of Germany actively encourages the strengthening of the bond between the GDR and the peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America, who are fighting against imperialism and neo-colonialism. We are developing friendly and mutually beneficial relationships with them. We encourage close cooperation and solidarity with them.'  
*Programme of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany*
- 3      Teach your children to value the friends of our country and to recognise its enemies!  
Helmut Stolz, *How should your child be?*
- 149-150      4      If we demonstrate *how* our opponent tries to manipulate, that is active *immunisation*. Once we have trained people to see what information the opponent broadcasts and what he keeps quiet, what he distorts and how he does this, which lies and half lies he

- disseminates, and which methods and practices he uses, then the opponent's media will have lost a great deal of their effect.  
Gerhard Neuner, *The Second Birth: on Education in Everyday Life*
- 150      5      These books need to be supplemented with a literature which will enable the adolescent reader to recognise the correlation between the extermination of the American Indians, the enslavement of the African, capitalist exploitation, and our attempts to establish socialism.  
Max Zimmering, in *The Children's Book: Thoughts and Views*
- 6      Fred Rodrian's "Catalogue of areas to be overcome in contemporary literature", in 'Beginning - balance - tasks'
- 7      The politically conscious and emotional preparation, establishment and reinforcement of the willingness to defend our country is still not sufficiently established as a theme of our children's literature. It is very important!  
Ibid.
- 150-151      8      I want to activate a healthy, anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist hatred. Many people hold this hatred against us, precisely those people who have always hated us and have always wanted to wipe socialism from the map. They would like children to be weak and spineless. No, I am in favour of the unshakeable certainty that we will never have anything in common with the class enemy.  
Gerhard Holtz-Baumert, in *The Children's Book: Thoughts and Views*
- 152      Gotthold Gloger's *Kathrin's Thursday*
- 9      presence of mind bordering on the fantastical  
Gotthold Gloger's *Kathrin's Thursday*
- 10      "It would still be impossible," said the fireman. "Look, madam, every metre of the fall would increase her speed. No one could catch a plummeting body like that in their bare arms without being squashed to a pulp. When the firebrigade are there with six men holding the blanket, it's possible for someone to survive a fall of 15 of 16 metres. But that takes six men!"  
Ibid.
- 153      11      Now it had gone quiet in the compartment. All eyes were on the officer. Igor understood that the silence spoke of the importance of his deed. It was as if the Soviet Union had done the people of the GDR a great service.



- Ibid.
- 12 Great pals. I'd have to invite them to school.  
Hans-Ulrich Lüdemann, *Me - then a long pause*
- 13 Soya once said to me - some people in the GDR think  
that we Soviet citizens are a kind of exception. But  
there are good and bad people where I come from, just  
like in the GDR.  
Ibid.
- 154 14 somehow more loving  
Ibid.
- 15 Anatoli. ... He's going to be like his father. Strong and  
reliable. A communist, just like I imagine one. Yes,  
when I think of *the* Communist, I always see Anatoli's  
father. I don't think he could do anything bad.  
Whoever loves the sun and children has to be a  
communist. In this country.  
Ibid.
- Gunter Preuß' *Come over the Bridge*
- 155 Marga Tschirner's *The New Grandma from Budapest*
- 16 Of course. Russian! Russian is international!  
Marga Tschirner, *The New Grandma from Budapest*
- 17 The babcia thumbs through the dictionary in silence.  
"Back home," she says slowly, "a babcia doesn't have  
time to go and sit in the cafe. It wouldn't be fitting  
either, people say."  
Ibid.
- 155-156 18 He leafs despairingly through the dictionary again. He  
must put together at least one Hungarian sentence. Just  
one. In the end, after a lot of searching, he added:  
Hiába, nagyon nehéz a magyar! Unfortunately,  
Hungarian is very difficult!  
Ibid.
- 156 19 "The fire's almost out. But they're all still there,  
clearing up, you mother and Ernő too. Yes, when they  
heard about the fire, they all came - Hungarians, Poles,  
Yugoslavians, Romanians - all of the people who work  
here, no matter which area they work in."  
Ibid.
- 20 Ernő is going to be late back. He still has a Party  
meeting.  
"Is he in the SED then?" asks Mathias, amazed.  
"He's in the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party."  
Mother kicks off her sandals and wiggles her toes.  
"Ernő is a communist, like me, and like Herr  
Szymanski."

- "I think that's great," says Mathias.  
Ibid.
- 157      21      Kimani's skin is smooth and brown. As shiny and brown as roasted coffee beans. Only the palms of his hands and the soles of his feet are as light as yours. Kimani is an African and he lives in Kenya. His white teeth shine in his dark face whenever Kimani laughs.  
Götz R. Richter, *Kimani*
- 22      Asina is seven years old. She has brown skin like milk chocolate, eyes like dark, shiny barley sugars and teeth like little pearl oysters.  
The funniest thing about Asina is her plaits.  
Christa Kozik, *A Snowman for Africa*
- 158      23      the chocolate-brown Asina  
Ibid.
- 24      this brown-skinned being  
Ibid.
- 25      Kasimir also speaks German perfectly. Because snowmen, so Kasimir claims, can speak all the world's languages. Only hoarsely, as if he had a cold.  
"Can you speak African too?" asks Karli.  
"Sheashea," answers Kasimir and nods.  
Ibid.
- 26      Of course the children ask what snow is. Karli explains that, in Europe, snow falls out of the sky in winter and the people freeze and have to wear shoes made of fur and hats and gloves made of fur. The African children laugh a lot about that. Shoes made of fur, how strange. They can't imagine that.  
Ibid.
- 159      27      One of the Africans shook my hand for a long time, and said something in African and pointed with his other hand to the lobby of the Palast der Republik (parliament building) and then to me and then to the lobby again. The others stood around us in a circle and clapped, and I don't know how it happened, but they began to sing; they sang something that sounded like an old African folk song.  
Arwed Bouvier, *My Very Best Twin Brother*
- 28      The Africans smiled at me, and one after the other they began to shake me by the hand. They had incredibly white teeth in their brown faces.  
Ibid.
- 29      Octaviano's beard curls adventurously as always, and his eyes roll dangerously behind his wire glasses.  
Günter Saalman, *Umberto*

- 159-160 30 Umberto can smell oranges. Someone hands him a coke. A wine bottle is being passed round, dressing gown cords are tied around foreheads, and suddenly red and blue biros appear as head decoration. A cheerful, flat-footed dance begins, someone shakes a rattle made from two tiny turtle shells with a leather tassel which swings in time to the rhythm.  
Ibid.
- 160 31 A pained smile appears on Octaviano's face. He knows as well as Umberto that the old woman has never been able to stand him. She secretly believes that he feeds on human flesh. But he's nothing like a cannibal.  
Ibid.
- 160-161 32 Theo turns quickly, grabs at him and holds on tight. "Did you think I'd laugh at you, man? Because you're brown? Is that why you told me all that rubbish about Africa? In Berlin there are masses of African students and Vietnamese, and tourists from India, and Arabs and ..."  
Maria Seidemann, *The Honey-Yellow Cart*
- 161 33 'I never thought till I read this book that coloured children living in our country were confronted with problems like these. It makes you think when you read about the prejudice of the people in the town towards Ben. These people were behaving in a petit bourgeois way and unjustly.'  
Girl, year 8, in 'Children on children's books - a questionnaire based on Maria Seidemann's "The Honey-Yellow Cart", written by Inge Huth, based on the evaluations of Deike Runge (Berlin-Treptow District Library) and Maria Sparka (Berlin Central District Library)'
- 161-162 34 Benjamin's mother had often spoken calmly and sensibly to him about it, and he had always tried not to let it bother him. His skin is dark brown, his hair is frizzy and black - so what? After all, he's not living in South Carolina, USA. He'll go to school for ten years, like every other child in this country, and if he makes a bit of an effort, he'll even be able to do his Abitur (A-levels) and study. He doesn't live in a slum: he lives in a flat with a bathroom and a balcony and he has his own room and a bike and a new drawing easel and lots of books.  
Maria Seidemann, *The Honey-Yellow Cart*
- 162 Gerhard Holtz-Baumert's *Alfons Zitterbacke in Trouble again*
- 35 "Well, how are things with you? Still bad, eh?" said Aunt Paulette, smiling and unpacking a large packet of margarine. "You're bound to need this, you can't get this here." Dad said very calmly, "Dear Aunt Paulette,

you're a very welcome guest here, but you keep on showing us that you have no idea about the world."  
Gerhard Holtz-Baumert's *Alfons Zitterbacke in Trouble again*

- 163      36      Dad had had another argument with Aunt Paulette. He'd said, "It serves you right with that Ami rubbish. That's the way the imperialists want to stick everyone in their place"  
Ibid.
- 37      I'm fighting for the unconditional desire not to swap this country for a golden palace or a swimming pool or a limousine, but to want to defend it tooth and nail against all attacks.  
Gerhard Holtz-Baumert, in *The Children's Book: Thoughts and Views*  
  
'stay cool, man'  
Hans-Ulrich Lüdemann's 'One evening in June...', in *The Bear cheerfully growls, Congratulations, Berlin*
- 38      "You really seem to know your stuff - in languages." Somehow Fred is irritated by this talent of his cousin, who is the same age as him.  
Hans-Ulrich Lüdemann's 'One evening in June...', in *The bear cheerfully growls, Congratulations, Berlin*
- 164      39      Rainer finds pleasure in this technical toy. But his imagination searches for a different story for the pictures on the screen.  
Ibid.
- 40      It was bad enough that his old man had lost his job with Ullstein. And that a man of fifty had little chance of finding something new. ... They've already sold the car. But not a word to the relatives in the East! Aunt Edith would just start on about the cheap rent for new flats again and the low prices of everyday items...  
Ibid.
- 41      "I'm a West Berliner!" says Fred Kohldorf, deliberately brash. "No cop round our way would be bothered about someone climbing around on a pile of stones like this!"  
Ibid.
- 42      With a loud crack, the small technical marvel shatters on the accurately laid walkway of the impressively constructed memorial garden.  
Ibid.
- 164-165      43      "If you follow the bees, you end up at the honey. But if you follow the bluebottles, you end up in the dung!"  
Ibid.
- 166      44      Up till now, I'd never had to do without anything when

we had our solidarity drives. The few pfennigs for Vietnam or Chile ... what kind of sacrifice was an ice cream? Mum had always got some in the fridge anyway.

Brigitte Birnbaum, *The Seven Day Diary*

- 167      45      some American rubbish  
Jürgen Leskien, *Georg*
- 46      Robby had yelled that the bastard had just copied it from Western television.  
Ibid.
- 47      Dad tapped Marek's glass with his spoon. "In the Berliner Zeitung you can often read in the classified pages: for sale - denim dress or stereo system - import - stuff from the other world. And Olaf and Ben fell for the test for men. And I'm asking you, why?"  
"That all sounds very political, but Olaf's just a little show-off!" Marek objected.  
Dad grasped Marek's hand quickly. "When ideas like that don't just reach your arms but your head, they become politics. Take note of that, son!"  
Ibid.
- 168      48      "The Japanese," said his father and sighed, "they have ideas. Not just toys like this! In lots of areas they're more than a few noses ahead of us. And they worry the West Germans too. I noticed that clearly enough in Munich!"  
Wolf Spillner, *Dipper*
- 49      "We have to be better than that lot over there!"  
Ibid.
- 50      "The fish - it's so pretentious," he says. "Trout for the party. When they've grown. Great, eh? Caught by you from your own pond when the guests are there. Like in the West! It's shit!"  
"I see," says the girl, but she doesn't understand him.  
"And the West is shit?"  
"Of course the West is shit if it means trying to copy things that don't belong here, do you understand?"  
Ibid.
- 169      51      "Just wait!" warned Helvi, glancing furtively at the door. "That's how it started in our family - with fancy clothes." She was shoving everything randomly back into her bag. "And then ... one fine day Dad never came back from a conference in Munich."  
Brigitte Birnbaum, *The Seven Day Diary*
- 170      52      "And what happened with that lot in Munich?" I say that lot deliberately. The word parents won't come out. Getting the uncle in from Berlin and then clearing off and leaving Hein by himself. The things you hear



about.

Hans-Ulrich Lüdemann, *Me - then a long pause*

- 53 "Otto explained it to me. They didn't want to leave me all alone. A letter came from a lawyer. About keeping the family together. But I don't want to go there. Never!"

Ibid.

- 170-171 54 No, I have no sympathy for boys who throw stones - not at animals, not at people and not at cars. Yet I would like to tell you why I love one who did, because I can understand why he did it, and from this you will see that throwing a stone can occasionally represent something good."

Kurt Kauter, 'A lovable stone-thrower', in *The Bear cheerfully growls, Congratulations, Berlin*

- 171 55 Whenever his mother speaks about it, her voice becomes hard, almost angry: it's all because of the damn outsiders, she says, they've built their own town over there, beyond Dogubayazit. They took the land as if it was their own. They took away the Turks' minerals, olives, hazelnuts, tea and grapes. And the State had to pay lots of money for them too. So much money that there wasn't enough left for building an irrigation system for the fields. And no schools could be built as they should be. Oh, these damn outsiders!"

Ibid.

- 56 ---and I, who can't condone the act in itself, would like to plead for leniency for Mehmed, the lovable stone-thrower, in the depths of Turkey.

Ibid.

- 172 57 Then his mother noticed that the separation also had some small advantages: he regularly sent money home, her life was made a little easier.

Marga Tschirner, *The New Grandma from Budapest*

- 173 58 Karl W. Bauer, 'Children under real socialism - notes on the everyday life of children in the GDR', in *Childhood in Europe: Between the Playground and the Computer*

- 59 What I fear is a new world War. Because that would be terrible. That's why we must do something to prevent it. I also fear the day when my mother dies. Otherwise I have no fear in my socialist fatherland.

Schoolgirl, aged 12, in *I get up at 6 o'clock*

- 60 We have a good life together, That's why I fear a war most of all. War is a murderous crime, which only serves to profit the weapons industry of capitalist countries and which demands many human lives.

Schoolboy, aged 12, in *I get up at 6 o'clock*

- 174 61 On top of this, it is important that I live in a socialist country. I can't really imagine a happy life under capitalism. I wouldn't like to live there with all the hunger, exploitation, unemployment and criminals. But to improve the lives of children in other countries, I practise solidarity. That's very important to me. Schoolgirl, aged 13, in *I get up at 6 o'clock*

## CONCLUSION

- 175 1 So long as our literature serves this social order and this State, it will be good literature.  
Ruth Werner, 'Positions. Opinions. Offers'
- 2 text books of the socialist way of life  
Hansgeorg Meyer, *Pioneer Life in the Children's Book*
- 176 3 In its best examples, it does not order and demand, but it encourages the readers to review their relationship with the world and to change themselves or the world, or both. By showing contradictions such as that between the ideal and reality, it invites the reader to intervene. It is compelling in a thoroughly voluntary way.  
Hannes Hüttner, 'Work and family in books for children and young people (speech at the Theoretical Conference of the Writers' Union of the GDR on the subject of the 24th GDR Children's Book Week'
- 4 Children's literature is not literature for children, but its subject is the child. The portrayal of the child's problems is to be understood as an impulse for a community to question the structures and processes within that community. This aspect of children's literature has become increasingly energetic in recent years. It has nothing to do with the old platitude that certain children's books can be read by adults and children with the same gain.  
"...in the child we recognise - this is how life was meant to be" (Contribution to the discussion at the Theoretical Conference of the GDR Writers' Union on the occasion of the 27th GDR Children's Book Week)'
- 5 'The portrayal of history and contemporary history in literature for children and young people'
- 178 6 Karin Richter, 'Modelling reality and implying readership : some questions on literature for children and young people and on its theory'
- 179 7 For years my publishing house has been faced with justified complaints about the lack of books for children. For years the printers have not been realising the programme of the Kinderbuchverlag, for

years, we have been complaining about the lack of paper and printing facilities made available to us, for years nothing has changed, it has only got worse. The 40th year of the Kinderbuchverlag's existence will be its most humiliating. Not because of a lack of manuscripts or illustrations, but because more than half of our first editions are not being published. That's several million books which will not reach the reader this year.

Katrin Pieper, 'I have other questions: copy of the letter from Editor-in-Chief Katrin Pieper to Klaus Höpcke, first printed in "Young World", 31.10.89'

Christa Kozik's *Kicki and the King*

'Mayland'

'Juneland'

'Octoberland'

180        8        "I think that the best way to change the world is with children. Because they always embody new hope that the world is getting better."  
Christa Kozik, *Kicki and the King*

9        "Always being locked up destroys the soul - even the soul of a snowman."  
Christa Kozik, *A Snowman for Africa*

181        10        This book was thought out and written several years ago. Suddenly our times have raced ahead and every day brings new truths. Many of the things which were spoken of in this book as hopes or visions have now been fulfilled. But Kicki, the cat who can smell the truth, will still remain the voice of the people.  
Christa Kozik  
9 November, 1989  
Christa Kozik, *Kicki and the King*

*Madness! Stories of the Changes in the GDR*

182-183    11        Perhaps he was guilty, but she was too. Perhaps he had put other people under pressure and forced them to speak, but she had tried that too. Although she knew nothing about him, she had condemned him, just because he refused to speak.  
Christa Grasmeyer, 'What did you do?' in *Madness!...*

183        12        The nearer she came to the centre, the more tourists with maps and cameras and video cameras she came across. The outsiders confidently claimed the centre of the pavements. Uninhibited, they shouted disparaging remarks to each other about the state of the buildings.  
Jutta Schlott, 'A change of climate'

13        "Do you like it here in the West?" I asked.  
"Of course, just look at the shops. You can get whatever

- you want - 17 sorts of chewing gum, real Coca Cola and bananas every day."  
Helga Talke, 'Tiny'
- 184      14      "Do you know what could save us, Ricci? Only a bloody millionaire can save us. He'll pull up in his big car and say, 'Miss Karla? Mr Ricci? Do you want to drive with me to Hollywood?' Instead of that we live in Honniwood. Honniwood is shit, but Hollywood is brilliant, Ricci!"  
Hannes Hüttner, 'Ricardo'
- 15      Of course she won't let me go over on my own, the dangers are much too great - the criminality, the drug dealing, not to mention Aids - the only thing missing is the big bad wolf who might eat me.  
Maria Seidemann, 'Bernie in clover'
- 185      16      "My old man and me, we're going over to the West. He's getting the job as boilerman. his uncle just has to get rid of the wop who has the job at the moment.'  
Günter Saalman, 'The shower'
- 17      We felt that it was important to capture these special times, particularly the way in which they were experienced in the GDR. The authors of this book, notable children's and youth authors from the GDR, all wrote their stories in the exciting weeks at the end of 1989/beginning of 1990. In this way, literary documents were created which could only have been produced in these weeks and months.  
Peter Abraham and Margareta Gorschenek, *Madness! Stories of the Changes in the GDR*
- 186      18      Coming to terms with the GDR past in books for children and young people requires a different 'affectedness' from the compulsion to conform to altered political circumstances. This is why hope perhaps lies instead with those who wrote in the GDR but were not allowed to publish there.  
Peter Dittmar, 'What they have always known but still don't say today'
- 187      19      Alex Hempel, 'Facing the reader has one disadvantage - it is difficult to recognise the profile'
- 188      21      Hannes Hüttner, 'Reading interests and reading behaviour of children and young people in the GDR'  
  
'Reading land - GDR'
- 189      22      The 'Beiträge' was not a publication which was seen under GDR circumstances as a secret representation of academic rebelliousness. For various reasons, not forgetting the circumstances of the times, we were not noticeably daring, following the motto that a banned

journal could achieve nothing, while one which persistently drew attention to humanism and quietly criticised school and cultural policies - usually taking literature as a vehicle - *could* achieve something. Unnecessarily, we bowed to authority, particularly during the seventies, when even Honecker was published in the journal. This is not the responsibility of those who later came to publish it. Steffen Peltsch, 'On our own affairs'

- |         |    |  |
|---------|----|--|
|         | 23 | Marianne H.-Stars, 'I love this book - whoever steals it is a thief'   |
| 189-190 | 24 | 'Dear reader! We are including this note to draw your attention to the fact that this book contains statements which are no longer correct. Yet we believe that the book should not be thrown away, that it is still worth reading and thinking about the contents. If you have any questions, please ask your parents, teachers or librarians.' |
|         |    | quoted in, Sabine Mähne, 'An open letter'  |
| 190     | 26 | 'Taboos in literature for children and young people - 28th conference of the International Institute for Youth Literature and Literature Research'   |
|         | 27 | Jürgen Kuczynski, 'A letter to Hermann Kant'   |





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31. III. 93

Dear Anne Marie Thompson,

Of course, it will be great pleasure for us if You include a photocopy of the article „Obraz świata według energetycznej literatury dla dzieci” at the back of your PhD dissertation.

I am pleased to inform you that your paper was very interesting and inspiring for Polish librarians and students.

Sincerely yours

prof. dr hab.

Warsaw University



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Wśród subskrybentów pierwszego numeru rozlosowaliśmy dwadzieścia pamiątkowych nagród książkowych. Otrzymali je:

Biblioteka Publiczna — Białostowie, Biblioteka Publiczna — Bobrowniki, Biblioteka Publiczna Biblioteka Publiczna — Białostowie, Biblioteka Publiczna — Chotomów, Mieczysław Kławiński — Brzozów, Zakład Wychowawczy dla Dziełeczyniek — Goleniów, Maria Horzowska — Gołuchów, Urząd Gminy w Świerklanach — Jankowice Rybnickie, Społeczna Szkoła Podstawowa — Kołobrzeg, Grażyna Szary — Łaziska Górne, 1 Szkoła Podstawowa Społeczna — Łuków, Joanna Kępała — Mikołów, Gmina Biblioteka Publiczna — Mrozy, Szkoła Podstawowa nr 13 — Mysłowice, Miłosz Pańfil — Sława, Szkoła Podstawowa nr 16 — Słupsk, Alicja Mejersowa — Śmiełnica, Zofia Klimek — Śniadowo, Dorota Mreńca — Strzeżin, Ośrodek Szkolno-Wychowawczy dla Dzieci Niedosłyszących — Warszawa.

## Uwaga, uwaga!

Prenumerując „Guliwera” na pierwsze półroczcie 1992 r. można również — dopłacając kwotę 20.000,- — zamówić dwa pierwsze numery naszego pisma, wydane w 1991 r. Wyślemy je natychmiast po otrzymaniu wpłaty.

W następnym numerze podamy listę prenumeratorów, którym dopisało szczęście w losowaniu i otrzymała pamiątkowe nagrody książkowe. Możesz i Ty znaleźć się wśród nich, abonując „Guliwera”. Warunki prenumeraty na II stronie okładki.

Bardzo prosimy o podawanie dokładnego adresu placówki, do której ma dotrzeć czasopismo, na blankiecie wpłaty. Prosimy też o zgłaszanie reklamacji w razie nieotrzymania przesyłki.

Dziękujemy pp. Jadwidze Rozpiątkowskiej, Renacie Kmiecik i Ludwikowi Jerzemu Kernowi za darowizny pieniężne oraz „Gazecie Wyborczej” za sfinansowanie nagród książkowych.



# Z WARSZTATÓW BADAWCZYCH

Anne Marie Thompson

## OBRAZ ŚWIATA WEDLE ENERDOWSKIEJ BELETRYSTYKI DLA DZIECI

Często najlepszą metodą zapoznania się z tym, jak dane społeczeństwo widzi i pojmuje samo siebie, jest analiza wydawanej w nim literatury dla dzieci. Książki takie, niekiedy nie w trybie jawnej dydaktyki, przekazują dzieciom uznawane społeczne wartości, zaznając je tym samym z nieakceptowanymi. Wielokrotnie na przykład słyszy się żądania usunięcia jakiegś książki z bibliotecznych półek, gdyż wyrażone w niej poglądy nie są odpowiednie dla młodych, podatnych na wpływy umysłów. Poprzez przedstawianie różnych narodowości bądź unikanie mówienia o nich, poprzez używanie narodowych stereotypów, książki takie oferują dzieciom obraz ich własnego kraju i jego miejsca w światowych stosunkach. Od czasu do czasu wprowadzane są pewne retusze i niektóre książki znikają z półek. Rzadziej, ale zdarza się, że całkowita zmiana sytuacji zmusza do gruntownej rewizji polityki wydawniczej.

Przez ostatnie pięć lat zajmowałam się literaturą dziecięcą kraju, który oficjalnie przestał już istnieć. Wraz z otwarciem granic NRD w listopadzie 1989 roku i następnie zjednoczeniem Niemiec jedenaście miesięcy później, obywatel NRD weszli w krąg zupełnie nowych sojuszy. Młodzi czytelnicy z tego kraju, przyzwyczajeni do określonej koncepcji świata, znaleźli się nagle po drugiej stronie politycznej barierki.

Enerdowska literatura dla dzieci liczy stosunkowo niewiele pozycji z dziełami fantastyki. Rolą literatury było odzwierciedlanie życia społeczeństwa. Dziś te książki, które w istocie obrazowały codzienną rzeczywistość NRD, nie mają już znaczenia dla życia na tym obszarze, wiele — w szczególności te, które poświęcone były różnym narodom — zawiera poglądy pozostające w sprzeczności z nowo powstałym porządkiem. Będzie rzeczą ciekawą zobaczyć, szczególnie w obliczu konkurencji docierającej z Zachodu, które z enerdowskich książek — i którzy z autorów — zdołają przetrwać w nowych Niemczech, a którzy nie będą doń przystawać.

Kiedy przystępowałam do tej pracy, zakładałam z góry, czego mogę się spodziewać — że na przykład w tak scentralizowanym kraju, w którym tematy na następny rok były omawiane i ustalane na dorocznej konferencji autorów i wydawców poddanych daleko idącej cenzurze, będzie powstawała wysoka dyktando, politycznie moralizatorska i monotonna literatura dla dzieci. Być może było tak w początkach istnienia NRD, kiedy trzeba było dostarczyć odtrutki na indoktrynację nazistowską, została natomiast milie rozczarowana obrazem społeczeństwa NRD zawartym w książkach powstałych w ostatnich latach. Literatura dziecięca była poddana mniej ostrej cenzurze niż książki dla dorosłych, a tym bardziej prasa, i z tej racji proponowała bardziej otwarte i krytyczne spojrzenie na społeczeństwo, niż to było możliwe w innych dziedzinach. Przeważały w niej sprawy

jednostek, a nie zbiorowisk: praca pokazywana była nie jako to, co nobilituje, lecz jako po prostu składnik życia rodzinnego; młodzi byli zachęcani do wiar w siebie, a nie do ślepej akceptacji punktu widzenia dorosłych.

Mozna powiedzieć, że energowska literatura dla dzieci była dość liberalna, jeśli chodzi o rysowany przez nią obraz swego społeczeństwa. Niestety, o obrazie innych narodów powiedzieć już tego nie można. Przeważało tu podjęcie zdecydowanie ideologiczne. Lan-sowane przez tę literaturę ujęcie spraw międzynarodowych cechowała swoista ślepotą. Gdyby narysować polityczną mapę świata na podstawie wyłącznie wiedzy wyniesionej z lektury energowskiej literatury dla dzieci, otrzymalibyśmy z jednej strony wrogów w postaci Republiki Federalnej Niemiec i Stanów Zjednoczonych, a z drugiej sprzymierzeńców — Związek Radziecki, Polskę, Kubę, nadto zaś Węgry, Bułgarię, Czechosłowację, pewne kraje Afryki i Ameryki Południowej oraz pozabawionych własnego państwa północnoamerykańskich Indian. Sama w sobie orientacja taka nie jest jeszcze niczym dziwnym i nienaturalnym, podobnie jak nieobecność w tym obrazie pewnych części Europy i świata: w brytyjskiej beletryście dla dzieci Wschodnia Europa również na przykład nie odgrywa prawie żadnej roli. Bardziej niepokojące jest natomiast wykorzystywanie orientacji politycznej do budowania narodowych stereotypów oraz zdecydowanie wrogie nastawienie do ludzi Zachodu. W kontekście dokonanego zjednoczenia spowoduje to zapewne niemałe zamieszanie w umysłach młodych czytelników.

NRD była krajem bardzo izolowanym, szczególnie w ostatnich latach swego istnienia, kiedy to dezaprobatą garbaczowskiej pierniostrojki oddaliła ten kraj nawet od jego wschodnich sprzymierzeńców. Obywatele NRD mogli bez specjalnej procedury odwiedzać jedy-

nie sześć krajów, w tym tylko wyjazd do Czechosłowacji nie wymagał uzyskania wizy. To prawda, że większość obywateli miała dostęp do zachodniej telewizji, dającej odmienne spojrzenie na świat, ale tylko niewielu znało Zachód z własnego doświadczenia; siłą rzeczy byli więc dość podatni na obraz świata kształtowany przez środki masowego przekazu. Odnosi się to szczególnie do młodych czytelników.

Zważywszy na historię NRD, prora-dziecka orientacja literatury dziecięcej była oczywiście nieunikniona. Artykuł 6 paragraf 2 Konstytucji NRD stwierdzał, że NRD jest nieodwracalnie sprzymierzona z ZSRR, zaś paragraf 27 Ustawy o Młodzieży zalecał młodym ludziom traktowanie sztuki i literatury ZSRR i innych krajów socjalistycznych jako swojej własnej. Po wojnie, zgodnie z rozkazem radzieckiego dowódcza wojskowego w Niemczech, celem było wyrażanie wpływów wysoce skutecznej indoktrynacji nazistowskiej, jakiej uprzednio poddana była młodzież. Aby ułatwić ustanowienie nowego, socjalistycznego porządku, pierwsze książki publikowane przez wydawnictwa energowskie były tłumaczeniami klasyki radzieckiej (na przykład *Timur i jego drużyna* Arkadego Gajdara). Trend ten został utrzymany i w późniejszych latach. Dorobek czterdziestoletniej działalności „Kinderbuchverlag” — największego wydawcy literatury dla dzieci — zawiera tłumaczenia z ponad dwudziestu języków, z czego 80% przypada na kraje bloku wschodniego, w tym 50% to tłumaczenia z języka rosyjskiego. Z innych obszarów językowych najczęściej tłumaczono z angielskiego — klasykę, taką jak książki Emily Brontë czy Daniela Defoe, wydane we wczesnych latach sześćdziesiątych oraz pisarzy współczesnych znanych ze swych socjalistycznych poglądów (np. Roberta Leasona, w swoim czasie redaktora „Morning Star” — gazety brytyjskich

komunistów). Ale stanowiły one mniej niż 10% wszystkich przekładów — bardzo niski wskaźnik w porównaniu z Niemcami zachodnimi, gdzie przekłady z angielskiego stanowiły 2/3 wszystkich przekładów literatury dziecięcej.

Fuzja tych dwu systemów mogłaby dać w efekcie wysoce reprezentatywną literaturę dla dzieci. Jednakże zważywszy na polityczny charakter zjednoczenia, w nowych Niemczech nie przewiduje się większej przyszłości literaturze z krajów Wschodniej Europy — wyjąwszy być może zbiory względnie niekontrowersyjnych bajek i legend ludowych. Po odrzuceniu starego reżimu odrzucone literatury jego sprzymierzeńców wydają się i logiczne, i nieuchronne; sprzyjać temu będzie i początkowa fascynacja literaturą Zachodu, przez tak

długi czas niedostępną. W nowych warunkach ekonomicznych domy wydawnicze na terenach byłej NRD będą zmuszone poddać się prawom rynku, a jedyną z pierwszych ofiar tego podmuchu będą najprawdopodobniej tłumaczenia książek dla dzieci z języka rosyjskiego. Przyszłość dotychczasowej krajowej literatury dla dzieci również wydaje się niepewna. Być może biografie radzieckich bohaterów oraz rewolucjonistów z całego świata będą — ze względów historycznych — spotykały się z pewnym zainteresowaniem, natomiast nie wydaje się, aby beletrystka, nie oferująca nic ponad wychwalanie wschodnich sprzymierzeńców i potępianie Zachodu, cieszyła się popytem czy choćby pozostała w obiegu. Oświadczenie wydane w styczniu 1990 roku przez energowskie Centrum Literatury Dziecięcej zalecało, aby cała uprzednio dostępna literatura dla dzieci została poddana ponownej ocenie — w szczególności z uwagi na zachęcanie do nienawiści i opisywanie wątpliwego heroizmu. Można się domyślać, że wiele pozycji zostanie z miejsca dyskwalifikowanych.

Książki dla dzieci obrazujące życie codzienne w NRD nie będą już zapewne mieć większego znaczenia; nie to jednak, jak sądzę, stanie się największym zmartwieniem. Zważywszy na polityczny kontekst zjednoczenia, na cele listy odrzuconych pozycji znajdą się najprawdopodobniej te książki, które idealizowały Europę Wschodnią, potępiały Zachód oraz przedstawiały wypaczony obraz drugiej wojny światowej.

Książki, które wybrałam, aby zilustrować moje stanowisko, to pozycje dla grupy wiekowej 10-13 lat, wydane przez „Kinderbuchverlag” w latach 1976-1988, a więc w okresie, w którym obalono sporo dotychczasowych tabu, a wiele wysoce cenionych aspektów energowskiej ideologii stało się w literaturze dla dzieci przedmiotem krytyki. Nie dotyczyło to natomiast obrazu innych narodowości zawartego w tej literaturze. Ich charakterystyki stały się nieco bardziej subtelne, ale pożądanym moralą pozostał zasadniczo niezmienny.

Od czasu otwarcia granic NRD niektórzy autorzy książek dla dzieci wystąpili z otwartą krytyką przesentymentalizowanego i bezkrytycznego obrazu Sowietów w energowskiej beletryście dziecięcej. Jako człowiek Zachodu bylam być może mniej uczulona na postawy prowschodnie niż antyzachodnie. Jeśli chodzi o te pierwsze, to od czasu do czasu zdarzały się przykłady rzeczywiście rażące, nie spotkałam ich jednak wiele. Postacie Rosjan zazwyczaj rysowano powierzchownie i stereotypowo; ich zasadniczą cechą było to, że kochali dzieci. W książkach żołnierze wojsk radzieckich stacjonujących w NRD z miejsca nawiązywali kontakty z młodzią. Choć z reguły nie mówili oni po niemiecku, kontakty te nie były czymś niezwykłym, gdyż młodzież bardzo chętnie ćwiczyła się w rosyjskim, którego uczono ją w szkołach. Ta rzekoma popularność Rosjan ostro kontrastuje dziś



z rzeczywistością, z jaką przychodzi się borykać radzieckim żołnierzom wciąż stacjonującym na terenach byłej NRD. Mimo jednak tego, że przedstawiano ich w bardzo pozytywnym świetle, były to z reguły literackie postacie mniej znaczące, toteż z lektur tych książek nie wyniosłam jakiegoś narzucającego się wrażenia o natrętności pozytywnego wzorca.

Przedstawiciele innych narodowości Europy Wschodniej pojawiają się jeszcze rzadziej, co trochę dziwi, zważywszy choćby na status Czechosłowacji. Oto jaskrawy przykład pozytywnego nastawienia do Wschodniej Europy: wydana w 1977 roku Margi Tschirner *Die Neue Oma aus Budapest*. Ta utrzymana w duchu internationalizmu, cechująca się szczególnie płytkim ujęciem powieści, znajduje się zapewne pomiędzy tymi pozycjami, które zostaną dyskwalifikowane w wyniku wyżej wspomianej pozbiednoczeniowej oceny. Jest to opowieść o chłopcu, który po powrocie z wakacji dowiaduje się, że jego mama wyszła za mąż za Węgry, z którym razem pracowała. Życie chłopca wzbogaca się w miarę tego, jak poznaje on przyjaciół swego nowego ojca oraz ich dzieci, głównie Węgrów i Polaków. W książce dwukrotnie wspomina się o robotnikach cudzoziemskich pracujących razem z rodzicami, wymieniając przy tej okazji Jugosławian i Rumunów; nikt z nich jednak nie występuje na kartach książki osobście. Kilkakrotnie pojawia się wątek uprzedzeń do innych narodowości, jest on jednak z miejsca odrzucany. Autorka zdaje się sugerować, że postawy internationalistyczne są tak silne, iż przełamują wszelkie bariery językowe. Dzieci Polaków i Węgrów bez najmniejszych przeszkód porozumiewają się ze sobą, od czasu do czasu tylko posługując się słownikami. Polacy i Niemcy używają w rozmowach rozbudowanych zdań, a dzieci pisują listy w obcych dla siebie językach. Cały

ten, dość sielankowy obraz współżycia wielonarodowej społeczności jest mocno zabarwiony politycznie.

W ramach, marginalnego w sumie, miejsca poświęconego innym narodowościom szczególną pozycję zajmują Polacy. Pracującym i mieszkającym w NRD Polakom poświęcono kilka książek, acz wszystkie one realizują ten sam schemat. Zawsze mianowicie przy tej okazji wprowadzono wątek wojny. Zasadą było, że Polacy, którzy w wyniku ostatniej wojny żyli w przedzieńcu w stosunku do Niemców, pozbywali się swych przesądów po zawarciu znajomości z obywatelami NRD. Wątek ten nie był jednak nigdy pierwszoplanowym. Natomiast wydana w 1979 roku książka Guntera Preussa *Komm über die Brücke* została w całości poświęcona przyjaźni polsko-enerdowskiej. Jak twierdzi jej autor, to właśnie było powodem, że zniknęła ona z obiegu po powstaniu „Solidarności” w Polsce, które doprowadziło do napięcia w stosunkach pomiędzy tymi dwoma państwami (widać tu, jak zmiany w stosunkach międzynarodowych wpływały na to, że pewne książki dla dzieci przestawały być mile widziane przez władze). Jeśli pominąć to, że wątek przyjaźni polsko-enerdowskiej jest w niej wątkiem pierwszoplanowym, książka Preussa nie odbiega od standardu w sposobie przedstawienia Polaków. Opowiada ona o przyjaźni dwóch chłopców mieszkających po przeciwnych stronach Odry. Przyjaźń ich jest złe przyjmowana przez dziadków chłopca z Polski, którzy stracili na wojnie swego syna. Cała historia kończy się pomyślnie z chwilą przeprowadzki chłopca do nowego mieszkania, z dala od wpływu dziadków. Morał z tej opowieści zdaje się płynąć taki, że Polacy źle robią, tak dużą wagę przywiązując do przeszłości.

Wydaje się, że właśnie stosunek do drugiej wojny światowej prezentowany w książkach dla dzieci będzie jedną

z największych przeszkód dla utrzymania się ich — i ich autorów — na powierzchni życia literackiego. Jest rzeczą naturalną, że temat: wojna odgrywa pewną rolę w beletrystyce dziecięcej każdego kraju, który był w nią uwikłany. W przypadku NRD odgrywa rolę wyjątkowo dużą, gdyż to wynikiem wojny było przecież samo istnienie państwa NRD, jego sojusze i postawy względem innych narodów. Jako państwo socjalistyczne i antyfaszystowskie NRD mogła twierdzić, że nie ma żadnej ciągłości między nią a Trzecią Rzeszą. Państwo to uznawało siebie za spadkobiercę tego wszystkiego, co postępowe w historii Niemiec, traktując zarażem Niemcy zachodnie jako spakobiercę faszyzmu. Zgodnie z tym stanowiskiem literatura dla dzieci propagowała dość kuriozalną wersję wydarzeń, uwypuklając komunistyczny ruch oporu i wyzwolenie przez Armię Czerwoną, a pomijając całkowitym milczeniem takie sprawy, jak opozycja aliantów względem faszyzmu czy przesładowanie Żydów. Jeszcze w 1987 roku-Reimer Dahnardt z kierownictwa „Kinderbuchverlag” prezentował pogląd, według którego „z losu Żydów nie wynika żadna pozytywna nauka”. Zdaje się to potwierdzać często formułowany zarzut, iż coraz częściej wojna służy głównie jako dramatogiczne tło dla powieści przygodowych: Żydzi nie stawiali oporu, ich losy nie stanowią więc dobrego materiału na zajmującą lekturę.

W latach osiemdziesiątych zaczęły pojawiać się książki dla dzieci, które wskazywały, że bynajmniej nie wszyscy późniejsi obywatele NRD byli podczas wojny bohaterami ruchu oporu. Pokazywano nawet takich, którzy wstąpili do partii nazistowskiej. Jednak i tutaj krytyka przeszłości jest bardzo płytką, a osobą takie zawsze oczyszczano z winy.

Przedstawiano ich jako tragicznie uwikłanych, ale w gruncie rzeczy niewinnych. Jeden z nich na przykład wstąpił

do NSDAP za namową ambitej, niezyskając już (trudno więc ją dziś obwiniać) żony, która chciała zrobić karierę; inny trudnił się czymś tak niekontrowersyjnym, jak grzebanie zwłok, a po wojnie szybko przekonał się do sprawy socjalizmu. Dobrą ilustrację trzech ważnych aspektów obrazu wojny w literaturze dziecięcej stanowi wydana w 1985 roku powieść Jurgena Jankowsky'ego *Ein Montag im Oktober*. Po pierwsze, wspomniany już wcześniej brak poczucia winy. Kathrin z przerażeniem odkrywa, że jej dziadek był w latach wojny strażnikiem w pobliskim obozie koncentracyjnym. Badanie archiwów miało ujawnić, że rozstrzelano tam więźnia, Rosjanina. Kathrin podejrzewa, że jej dziadek był w to zamieszany. Okazuje się jednak, że i on, i jego przyjaciel traktowali więźniów po ludzku.

Drugi aspekt dotyczy postawy wobec zachodnich aliantów. W pewnym miejscu książki wspomina się, że obok obozu dla więźniów ze Wschodniej Europy znajdował się drugi, w którym przetrzymywano Włochów, Holendrów, Duńczyków i Francuzów, lecz w o wiele lepszych warunkach. Od czasu do czasu wydawano im dodatkowe racje żywnościowe — konserwy, tytoń, wino; otrzymywali niewielką zapłatę za swą pracę, a nawet wypuszczano ich na przepustki. Być może zdarzało się coś takiego, jednak w zestawieniu z pozbawionymi wszelkich praw więźniami ze Wschodu stanowi to obraz wysoce balamutny. W książce wspomina się też zdawkowo, że dziadek Kathrin uciekł z amerykańskiego obozu dla jeńców wojennych powodowany chęcią powrotu do domu. Tonacja książki zdaje się implikować, że jego uwiezienie było rzeczą złą.

Trzecia ze spraw oświetlanych w omawianej powieści dotyczy kwestii kontynuacji. Dziadek wspomina, że człowiek odpowiedzialny za zastrzelanie Rosjanina uciekł na Zachód i osie-



dlit się w Zagłębiu Ruhry. Rozesłano za nim listy gończe, ale można wątpić, czy został skazany. Niemcy zachodnie zostają tu pokazane jako raj dla fałszywów.

Dziś, po dokonanych zjednoczeniu, można oczekiwać, że książki, których bohaterowie odrzucają odpowiedzialność za faszystowską przeszłość, znikną z rynku i bibliotek. Zacznie dominować zachodnoniemieckie spojrzenie na wojnę i — jak na ironię — te książki, które krytykowano za używanie scenarii wojennej jako tła dla przygodowej fabuły, będą miały większą szansę przetrwania niż te, które problematyką przeszłości próbowały się zająć bardziej poważnie.

Przystosowanie się do nowych warunków nie będzie łatwe dla czytelników, którzy wychowali się na panującym wcześniej ujęciu przeszłości. W ulubionych książkach będzie się znajdować poglądy, które dziś uważa się za ideologicznie nie do przyjęcia. Być może najtrudniej będzie młodym czytelnikom pogodzić się z tym, że oto należą do tego Zachodu, który przez wiele lat przedstawiano im w tak negatywnym świetle. Zgodnie z art. 18 Konstytucji, jednym z celów NRD było zwalczanie „imperialistycznego barbarzyństwa”, które dehumanizowało stosunki międzyludzkie. Zachód był wrogiem, czego dowodzono w książkach dla dzieci na wiele sposobów, często używając wielce pokretnych argumentów.

Jak już wspominałam, Niemcy zachodni byli przedstawiani jako spakobiercy faszystowskiej przeszłości. Kraj ten pokazywano nie tylko jako siedlisko zepsucia; potępiano również samych obywateli. Krewini z Zachodu mogli wywierać tylko negatywny wpływ. Podczas gdy posiadanie matki Bułgarki czy ojca Węgry nie powodowało żadnych kłopotów, to ciotka z Kolonii bądź babcia z Hamburga, przysyłające od czasu do czasu prezenty, były przeżarte materia-

lizmem i zepsute. Krewini tacy pojawiali się zresztą w książkach dość rzadko — być może dlatego, że lepiej było przedstawiać ich jako coś odległego i niefortunnego, co przejawia się tylko pod postacią prezentów, a być może dlatego, że kwestia odwiedzin krewinych z Zachodu oraz utrudnienia w ruchu w drugą stronę stanowiła grunt dość śliski. Gerhard Holtz-Baumer, zdecydowany rzecznik specyficznie socjalistycznej literatury dla dzieci, w jednym ze swych opowiadań opisuje, jak to protekcyjna ciotka z Zachodu przysyła Alfonsowi gumę do żucia, za co spotyka ją stosowna „podzięką”, kiedy chłopcu udaje się przykleić ją tą gumą do fotela. Książka ta jest zresztą być może wyjątkiem przedstawiającym rodzinne związki z Zachodem jako nie wywierające szkodliwego wpływu na dziecko. W większości bowiem przypadków dzieci posiadające krewnych na Zachodzie (odgrywali oni z reguły rolę drugoplanowej) i otrzymujące od nich prezenty stawały się w efekcie niesolidne i interesowne. Ujęcie takie stosowano na tyle powszechnie, że kiedy bohater literacki zachowywał się niewłaściwie, można było iść o zakład, że zostanie to złożone na karb babci z Zachodu. Tych, którzy wyjeżdżali na Zachód w interesach, przedstawiano w podobnym świetle — zaniebdywali swe rodziny z powodu przepracowania, przysyłając w zamian prezenty, co oczywiście stanowiło wyraz ich zmaterializowania.

Wasserramel Wolfa Spillnera z 1984 roku rozwija temat korupcji w Partii — uprzednio zupełnie niemożliwy do podjęcia. Okazuje się, że opisany przypadek korupcji był bezpośrednio związany z wyjazdem służbowym do Monachium. Natomiast ci, którzy znajdowali pracę w Europie Wschodniej, pokazywani byli w pozytywnym świetle. W książce Guntera Gorchicha *Der unbekante Grossvater* (1984) dziadek zaniebduje

rodzinę, aby móc wyjechać do pracy na Syberii; autor bierze jego stronę, przedstawiając jego żonę i syna jako drobno-mieszczan o wąskich horyzontach, robiących dziadkowi awanturę, kiedy po latach przyjeżdża z wizytą. W *Die neue Oma aus Budapest* Węgry są zadowoleni, że pracują w NRD, bowiem dobrze zarabiają i mogą wysłać prezenty do swych bliskich. Słowem, korzyści materialne nie budzą zastrzeżeń, jeśli tylko są efektem pracy w NRD.

Innym ciekawym przykładem podwojnej moralności stosowanej w odniesieniu do Zachodu jest opowiadanie Kurta Kautera *Ein Lebenswetter Steinwetter* wydane w 1987 roku. Autor stwierdza na początku, że choć nie cierpi chłopców rzucających kamieniami, to chciałby bronić jednego, który to czynił. Dalej następuje opowieść o Mehmedzie, tureckim chłopcu mieszkającym na wsi, w pobliżu której zlokalizowano bazę wojsk amerykańskich. Wiadomo, wychowawczy wpływ żołnierzy amerykańskich może być tylko negatywny. W ostatniej scenie książki widzimy Mehmeda ciskającego kamieniem w autobus pełen amerykańskich turystów, czym zaskarbia sobie podziw matki oraz autora opowiadania.

W latach osiemdziesiątych wiele wątków drugoplanowych dotyczyło dzieci pozostawionych przez rodziców, którzy uciekli na Zachód. Czasem podawano nawet motywy takiej ucieczki. W *Ich - dann eine Weile nichts* Hansa Ulricha Ludemanna (1986) na przykład, Hein Himmelangst opowiada, że jego ojciec nie dostał upragnionego awansu, na który zasługiwał, i w konsekwencji wyjechał. I tu jednak, tak jak w innych analogicznych przypadkach, spotyka się to z bezwzględnympotępieniem — przy kompletnym braku jakiegokolwiek charakterystyki tych, którzy uciekli i ich uprzedniego życia rodzinnego; potępienie wspierane jest natomiast opisem trudności, jakich doświadczają ci, któ-

rzy pozostali, oraz wielkim moralnym oburzeniem wyrażanym w ich imieniu. Ci, jak Hein, którzy oparli się namowom rodziców i zostali w NRD, przedstawiani byli w jak najlepszym świetle, jako pościeści prawe i rzetelne. W kontekście wielkiej liczby uciekinierów z NRD w ostatnich miesiącach jej politycznego bytu, a szczególnie w obliczu gremialnego głosowania za zjednoczeniem z RFN, można oczekiwać innego spojrzenia na te trudne problemy, temat ten zapewne podjęty zostanie na nowo.

W latach pięćdziesiątych i w początku lat sześćdziesiątych akcja wielu powieści rozgrywała się na tle rewolucji w rozmaitych krajach świata, szczególnie w Ameryce Południowej i Afryce. Wraz jednak z rosnącą izolacją NRD na arenie międzynarodowej, świat jej literatury dziecięcej znacząco się skurczył, a i pozycji tego rodzaju ukazywało się coraz mniej. Prawdę mówiąc, nie ma czego żałować: pomimo najlepszych intencji i wyrażanego poparcia dla uciskanych ludów walczących o swe zwolnienie, walkę ich przedstawiano w sposób bardzo uproszczony, a często traktowano ich wielce protekcyjalnie. Kimari Gotza Richtera na przykład zaczyna się następująco: „Skóra Kimarniego jest gładka i brązowa, łśni jak ziarna palonej kawy. Jedynie poduszki jego dłoni i podeszwy stóp są białe jak twoje. Kimari jest Afrykaninem mieszkającym w Kenii. Jego białe zęby byszczą w owalu ciemnej twarzy, gdy się uśmiecha”. Było to napisane w 1964 roku. *Ein Schneemann für Afrika* Christy Kozik wydana w 1987 i opowiadająca o marynarzu z NRD, który w lodowce swego statku wiezie batwana w prezencie dla dziewczynki z Afryki, nie zawiera wyraźnie tego odniesienia do białego czytelnika, ale tkwi ono implícite w opisie „czekoladowej cery”, w fascynacji obrazem czarnych rąk dotykających białego batwanka oraz w wysocy naiwnym obrazie życia w Afryce. Literatura

dziecięcia w NRD była adresowana do białej, socjalistycznej publiczności. W książkach malujących życie w NRD grupy mniejszościowe pojawiały się rzadko, a okazjonalne portrety studentów z Afryki były bardzo stereotypowe: śpiew, taniec, przewracanie oczami i temu podobne koszałki. Książki takie będą teraz poddane nie tylko urzędowej ocenie, ale również analizowane przez działające w RFN grupy publicznego nacisku, które oceniają co jest, a co nie jest do przyjęcia, skupiając uwagę na takich sprawach, jak przesady dotyczące płci czy rasy.

Można oczekiwać, że wiele energetycznych książek dla dzieci nie zda tego egzaminu: w każdym razie przyszłość ich stoi pod wielkim znakiem zapytania, podobnie jak przyszłość ich autorów. Jeśli tylko ich dzieła nie były zbyt kontrowersyjne, pisarze w NRD mieli zapewnione bezpieczeństwo socjalne; obecnie poddani zostaną rynkowej grze podaży i popytu. Ciekawe, jak w tej nowej sytuacji będą sobie radzić. Zważywszy, że fantastyka dziecięca była w NRD w zasadzie nieobecna, będą być może chcieli spróbować swych sił w tym własnie gatunku, bezpieczniejse to od opisywania realiów życia, a i krąg potencjalnych odbiorców szerszy. Pozostaje niewiadomą, czy utrzyma się względnie odrębny od pozostałej części Niemiec rynek czytelniczy. Niewykluczone, że przez jakiś czas jeszcze będzie trwało energetowskie poczucie tożsamości czy choćby odrębności — nie politycznej, lecz społecznej, wsparte na deprymującym poczuciu bycia obywatelami drugiej kategorii, zasilianych finansowo przez bogatszy Zachód. Tak czy inaczej wydaje się rzeczą nieuniknioną, że — z uwagi na rosnące bezrobocie oraz koszty utrzymania — każdy autor, chcąc wieść uczciwe życie, będzie musiał zabiegać o jak najszerzą publiczność.

Syzyen, 1991  
Tłumaczenie: Andrzej Chmielecki

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Wśród wielu kolorowych czasopism warto zwrócić uwagę na uznane i lubiane przez pokolenia młodych rodziców, istniejące od 1951 roku **TWOJE DZIECKO**. Miesięcznik ten zawiera porady dotyczące wychowania i pielęgnacji dziecka, propaguje aktualną wiedzę z zakresu psychologii rozwojowej i wychowawczej a także medycyny. Podpowiada jak bawić się z dzieckiem i na jakie pozycje książkowe warto zwrócić uwagę. W formie interesujących wywiadów specjalści odpowiadają na pytania i wątpliwości rodziców. Dzięki temu **TWOJE DZIECKO** traktowane jest w wielu rodzinach jako przyjaciel i doradca. Nie ma w nim tematów tabu. Trudna, problematyczna wychowania dzieci z zespołem Downa zyskała także stałe miejsce w tym piśmie. Dlatego właśnie ten miesięcznik czyta się z przyjemnością i nie dziwi duża jego popularność — tym bardziej, że od 1 lipca 1990 wydawany jest w nowej, atrakcyjnej szacie graficznej przez Res Publica Press International Ltd.

## ABSTRACT

The third issue of *Guliver*, as the first in the year 1992, has already a new numeration: 1/3.

The issue opens an essay by Urszula Chęcińska *W zaczarowanym kręgu rymów dziecięcych* (In a Magic Circle of Children Rhymes), dedicated to the poetical production for children by the illustrious poetess Kazimiera Iłakowiczówna (1892-1984).

In the column *Radość czytania* (The Joy of Reading) Gertruda Skotnicka analyses the tale *Bohaterki Miś* (The Heroic Bear) by Bronisława Ostrowska, republished by Polish Kultur Foundation in London, on the occasion of 70- anniversary of the recovery of Polish independence. Anna Maria Krajevska writes about the stories of Matgorzata Musierowicz, and Joanna Papuzńska treats of the Polish publication *Wielkomiłud* by Roald Dahl.

Kazimierz Romanowicz, the owner of a polish library „Libella” in Paris, tells about a great weight of a book among the Polish emigration environment and about the sense of Polish book for children. In an interview entitled *Dotknąć tajemnicy* (To touch the Mystery) Justyna Wawrzak discusses with a famous Lithuanian graphic, living in Poland, Stasys Eidrigėičius, the prizeman of Grand Prix in Bratislavia (1991) for the illustrations to the story „Puss in Boats”.

In the part *Na ladach księgarskich* (On the books counters) are discussed the published newness: Grzegorz Leszczyński writes about the Polish issues, so-called Disney's serie of the books for children, Barbara Tylicka about the reteing fashion on nature for children, Danuta Świerczyńska-Jeloniek about the reissue of *Piotruś Pan* (Peter Pan), calling the special attention to the get-up of the books. Michał Zajac about the meaning for the young people an adaptation *Opowieści okrągłego stołu* (The Tales of a Round Table). Among the first editions are discussed: the tale of Ewa Maria Leiki *Wyspa Urodzinowa* (The Birthday Island) with the illustrations by Maria Eker, by MAG and the tale of Joanna Rudniańska *Rok smoka* (A Year of Dragon).

In the section *Miedzy dzieckiem a książką* (Between child and a book) we find an article by Maria Machowska referred to a popularisation of *Dziewczynka z zapalnikami* (The Girl with Matches). This time the authoress presents also the materials of an interesting school-lesson and the children's formulations about the story. Barbara Bialkowska writes about the public libraries for children in Poland and about the supply their collection of books. Grażyna Lewandowicz continues her series *Dziecko i informacja* (A Child and Information).

The issue contains also an article by Anne Marie Thompson from Great Britain *The view of the world through GDR Children's Fiction*. It's an example of a report delivered at the Tens Congress IRSCIL in Paris.

Halina Wiatr presents a professional Sovietic magazine *Dietskaja Literatura* (Children's Literature). Anna Radziejowska-Hlichen writes about the world congress of the research workes of children's literature in Paris, and Janusz Dunin presents the history of Polish and Russian editions of famous Struwwelpeter by Heinrich Hoffman. The issue closes the polemic statement by Jolanta Kowalczykówna on a theme the latest publications of the same author.